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THE WORKS OF

# RALPH WALDO EMERSON

WITH A GENERAL INDEX AND A MEMOIR
BY JAMES ELLIOT CABOT

*WITH STEEL PORTRAITS AND ETCHINGS*

IN FOURTEEN VOLUMES

VOLUME XIII

# A MEMOIR

OF

# RALPH WALDO EMERSON

BY

JAMES ELLIOT CABOT

IN TWO VOLUMES

VOL. I.

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# PREFACE.

My object in this book has been to offer to the readers and friends of Emerson some further illustrations, some details of his outward and inward history that may fill out and define more closely the image of him they already have, rather than to attempt a picture which should make him known to strangers, or set him forth in due relation to his surroundings or to the world at large. The position of literary executor to which he appointed me, and the desire of his family that I would write a memoir of him, have given me access to his unpublished writings (including many letters confided to me by some of his most valued correspondents, to whom I render hearty thanks), and to sources of information in the memories of persons who knew him in his early years and in his home. My aim has been to use these opportunities to furnish materials for an estimate of him, without undertaking any estimate or interposing any comments beyond

what seemed necessary for the better understanding of the facts presented. Where I may seem to have transgressed this rule, I am in truth for the most part only summing up impressions gathered from his journals and correspondence, or from the recollections of his contemporaries.

The letters I have found less directly available than I had hoped. Emerson says of himself that he "was not born under epistolary stars:" he did not readily communicate his feelings of the moment, before they were tried and sifted by reflection; letter-writing was an effort to him, and the effort prevented him from giving to his letters that direct impress of his personality — of the man, apart from the author — which we look to find in them. And the same thing is true to a great extent even of his journals, of which there is a full series from his college-days onward almost to the end of his life: they do not often bring us closer to him than we are brought by his published writings. I have been obliged to dismember and rearrange them more than I wished, and often to give their general drift in my own words, instead of simply allowing him to tell his own story.

But if I have not been able to draw from these interior sources, or from a minute examination of his life, much of first-rate importance to add to our

knowledge of Emerson, I have been entirely free, on the other hand, from the gravest embarrassment that can meet the biographer of a man of letters who aspired to be a public teacher, — I mean the traces of a discrepancy between the teachings and the character. Commenting in his journal on the remark of a friend, that no one would dare to uncover the thoughts of a single hour, Emerson says: "Is it so bad? I own, that to a witness worse than myself, and less intelligent, I should not willingly put a window into my breast. But, to a witness more intellectual and virtuous than I, or to one precisely as intelligent and well-intentioned, I have no objection to uncover my heart." He was right; he could only have gained by it.

A large number of his lectures, including some on which he spent a great deal of time and thought, remain unpublished. I have given in the Appendix a list of all that are known to me, with short abstracts of most of them. The question of their publication remains for the present undecided. My own impression is that he had extracted and used most of what he would have cared to publish.

The portrait prefixed to the first volume is the gift of Dr. William Herbert Rollins, who had it engraved under his supervision after a reduction

made by himself from the well-known photograph by Hawes, made, Mr. Hawes thinks, in 1856: the best likeness that we have of Emerson, as it appears to me, and here admirably reproduced.

J. E. C.

*May*, 1887.

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CHAPTER X.

# RALPH WALDO EMERSON.

## CHAPTER I.

### BIRTHPLACE. — PARENTAGE. — BOYHOOD.

### 1803–1817.

THE Reverend William Emerson, minister of the First Church in Boston, addressing his people on Sunday, July 17, 1808, upon the occasion of their quitting their old meeting-house in the heart of the town for one "more spacious and convenient" in the suburbs, remarked that they broke none of the commandments of Jesus Christ in exchanging "a house which is exposed to the noise and dust of a publick street, for one which is remote from the business and amusements of the town." And on the following Thursday, when services were held for the first time in the new building, he reminded them to be thankful that "in place of an ancient and decaying house, situated in the most busy and populous part of the town, we now possess this new, commodious and beautiful edifice, where, in the silence of retirement, yet in the centre of the ter-

ritory of the metropolis, we may worship the Lord our God."[1]

The First Church was not only the oldest in Boston, but older than the town itself, since it was gathered and "imbodied" in Charlestown, under the shade of a tree, before Winthrop and his associates crossed the river. The ancient house they were leaving, the third they had occupied, was, when it was built (in 1713), President Porter says,[2] the most expensive and elaborate in New England. It was placed, very fitly for the time, on Cornhill (now Washington Street), where Rogers' Building now stands, not far from the corner of State Street. But, with the growth of the town, Cornhill was getting crowded and noisy, and in 1808 the proprietors of the Old Brick (as the meeting-house was called) accepted the offer of Mr. Benjamin Joy to build for them a new meeting-house and a parsonage of brick, and also three other brick dwelling-houses, on the parish land in Summer Street; receiving in return the Cornhill property and $13,500 in cash.

The old parish house was a gambrel-roofed wooden building, standing in the middle of a piece of land (near an acre in extent), belonging to the church, but "situate [in the language of the deed

[1] *An Historical Sketch of the First Church in Boston.* By Rev. William Emerson. Boston, 1812: pp. 241, 251.

[2] *New Englander*, May, 1883.

from Richard Hollingshead and Ann, his wife, in 1680] at the southerly end of the town of Boston," namely, on Summer Street, where is now the corner of Chauncy Street, near half a mile from the meeting-house.

In this house, which stood, village-fashion, back from the street, in an orchard and garden extending down to where Avon Street now is, with a bordering row of elms and Lombardy poplars on Summer Street, Ralph Waldo, the fourth child and third son of the Reverend William and Ruth (Haskins) Emerson, was born, on the 25th of May, 1803.

One who should seek "the silence of retirement" in the same place to-day would find there but little contrast in this respect with Washington Street; nor would he find it easy, unless helped by recollections going back many years, to imagine, in the place of the long rows of lofty warehouses shutting out the sky, and the roaring flood of traffic that pours between them, the quiet, open region of gardens and pastures, sunny in winter and shaded in summer, in the midst of which Emerson's childhood was passed. "As late as 1815 [says Mr. Drake[1]] there was a pasture of two acres on Summer Street, and the tinkling of cow-bells was by no means an unusual sound there.

[1] *Old Landmarks and Historic Personages of Boston.* By Samuel Adams Drake. Boston, 1873: p. 381.

The fine old estates of the Geyers, Coffins, Russells, Barrells, Lydes, Prebles, etc., were covered with orchards and gardens; and these hospitable residents could set before their guests cider of their own manufacture, or butter of their own making."

"Yesterday [Emerson writes in his journal, May 26, 1872], my sixty-ninth birthday, I found myself on my round of errands in Summer Street, and, though close on the spot where I was born, was looking into a street with some bewilderment, and read on the sign 'Kingston Street' with surprise; finding in the granite blocks no hint of Nath. Goddard's pasture and long wooden fence, and so of my nearness to my native corner of Chauncy Place. It occurred to me that few living persons ought to know so much of the families of this fast-growing city; for the reason that aunt Mary, whose manuscripts I had been reading, had such a keen perception of character and taste for aristocracy, and I heard in my youth and manhood every name she knew."

The Summer Street region, even as I remember it twenty years later, was a boy's paradise, and echoed every holiday afternoon and mid-day recess with "Coram" and "Hy-spy;" having just the right admixture of open ground, fences, and thoroughfares, with intricacies and lurking-places of sheds and wood-houses, and here and there a deserted barn, with open doors and a remnant of hay

long untouched. There was even a pond, where a beginner might try his first skates; and the salt water was close by, with wharves where he might catch flounders and tom-cod. Then, near at hand, the Common, at that time a playground from end to end.

But Emerson knew none of these things. He never, he told me, had a sled, and would not have dared to use one, for fear of the "Round-Pointers," — rough boys from Windmill Point and the South End, who "were always coming;" taking Summer Street on their way to the Common, where they had pitched battles with the West-Enders. His mother had cautioned him against the rude boys in the street, and he used to stand at the gate, wistful to see what the rude boys were like.

Somewhere in his journals he speaks of a time when he was "a chubby boy, trundling a hoop in Chauncy Place, and spouting poetry from Scott and Campbell at the Latin School," but I find no other evidence of play or of chubbiness. "We were babies and boys together," says the Reverend Dr. William Henry Furness in some precious recollections of Emerson with which he has favored me, "but I can recall but one image of him as playing, and that was on the floor of my mother's chamber. I don't think he ever engaged in boys' plays; not because of any physical inability, but simply because, from his earliest years, he dwelt in

a higher sphere. My one deep impression is that, from his earliest childhood, our friend lived and moved and had his being in an atmosphere of letters, quite apart by himself. I can as little remember when he was not literary in his pursuits as when I first made his acquaintance."

And Rufus Dawes, a school-fellow of Emerson's at the Latin School, describes him as a "spiritual-looking boy in blue nankeen, . . . whose image more than any other's is still deeply stamped upon my mind as I then saw him and loved him, I knew not why, and thought him so angelic and remarkable."[1]

This early seriousness naturally found favor with his elders rather than with those of his own age. "When I was thirteen years old [he writes in his journal in 1839], my uncle Samuel Ripley one day asked me, 'How is it, Ralph, that all the boys dislike you and quarrel with you, whilst the grown people are fond of you?' Now I am thirty-six, and the fact is reversed: the old people suspect and dislike me, and the young people love me." The explanation lay perhaps in a certain lofty carriage of the head, — the air of one, as Dr. Furness says, dwelling apart in a higher sphere, — sometimes remarked also in Edward and Charles, and apt to be mistaken for pride, though it was in

[1] "Boyhood Memories." *Boston Miscellany*, February, 1843, p. 60.

truth quite free from any self-reference. "My grandfather, William [Emerson says], walking before his father to church on a Sunday, his father checked him: 'William, you walk as if the earth was not good enough for you.' 'I did not know it, sir,' he replied with the utmost humility. This is one of the household anecdotes in which I have found a relationship."

The arrangement with Mr. Joy was opposed by some of the proprietors, and one of them, Mr. Benjamin Austin, is said to have vented his feelings in the following epigram: —

> "Farewell, Old Brick, — Old Brick, farewell:
> You bought your minister and sold your bell."

The taunt about the minister referred to another negotiation, in consequence of which the Reverend William Emerson had been transferred from the town of Harvard, where he was first settled, to Boston.

William Emerson had in his veins the blood of several lines of "painful preachers" and spiritual guides of the people, from the earliest days of the colony. Far from being "comatose" persons, as Mr. James, in his reminiscences of Emerson,[1] calls them, they were, several of them, heroic enthusiasts, remarkably alive to what is best worth living

[1] *Literary Remains of the Late Henry James.* Edited by William James. Boston, 1885: p. 294.

for. One line has for its first representative in America the Reverend Peter Bulkeley, Rector of Woodhill or Odell in Bedfordshire, England, and Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge, — a man of ancient family and considerable estate, who, being silenced by Laud for non-conformity, crossed the sea in 1634 to New England, and pushed out through the woods with Major Simon Willard to Musketaquid (which they named Concord), and there spent most of his fortune as a pioneer of civilization. "He was addressed [says Shattuck[1]] as father, prophet, and counsellor by his people and by all the ministers of the country;" and his "Gospel Covenant," one of the first books published in New England, has good counsel for the present day. The Church, he says, is built on the foundation of prophets and apostles; "not in regard of their persons, but of their doctrine," — a sentiment which finds its echo in the Divinity Hall Address of his descendant two hundred years afterwards.

His granddaughter, Elizabeth Bulkeley, married the Reverend Joseph Emerson, the pioneer minister of Mendon, who barely escaped with his life when the village was destroyed by the Indians. Their son, Edward, "sometime deacon of the First Church of Newbury," married Rebecca, daughter of Cornelius Waldo, "from whom [says one of her descendants] came that beloved name into the

[1] *History of Concord.* Boston, 1835: p. 158.

family." Their son, the Reverend Joseph Emerson of Malden (Harvard College, 1717), was a heroic scholar, "the greatest student in the country [says his granddaughter, Mary Moody Emerson], and left a library considerable for those days. He was a reader of the Iliad, and said he should be sorry to think that the men and cities he read of never existed. If it had not been for my grandmother, my father would have been killed, perhaps, by confinement, for his father thought he ought never to leave his lessons. The children sat upon a settle, with lessons or catechism, the biggest at one end, the next in size at the other, and the little one in the middle. For out-door relaxation there was the farm work; but even that was grudged. When he was working the hay one afternoon, his father looked out of the window and called, 'Billy, Billy, it 's a waste of your precious time: go back to your books.' But grandmother said, 'No, it does him good to work a little: he has books enough.' They all believed in poverty, and would have nothing to do with uncle John of Topsfield, who had a grant of land, and was rich. My grandfather prayed every night that none of his descendants might ever be rich. My father, after he left college, taught school in Roxbury, then preached in Concord, was settled there, and married Phebe Bliss. Her mother was Phebe Walker, a woman such as I have read about, but,

except her, never seen. She never fell before affliction. My mother reproached her with want of feeling because she went to church whilst her husband lay dead in the house. But she was rapt in another world."

Miss Emerson's father, of whom she here speaks, was William Emerson of Concord, the patriot minister of the Revolution. He was the son of Joseph of Malden, the scholar, and Mary Moody, daughter of the Reverend Samuel Moody ("Father Moody"), a man of transcendent zeal in doctrine and practice. "In every town in Maine [says Emerson in one of his early lectures] you may still hear of the charities and of the commanding administration of his holy office, of Father Moody of Agamenticus. When the offended parishioners, wounded by his pointed preaching, would rise to go out of church, he cried out, 'Come back, you graceless sinner, come back!' And when they began to fall into ill customs and ventured into the alehouse on a Saturday night, the valiant pastor went in after them, collared the sinners, dragged them forth, and sent them home with rousing admonitions. Charity then went hand in hand with zeal. They gave alms profusely, and the barrel of meal wasted not." He gave away his wife's only pair of shoes from her bedside to a poor woman who came to the house, one frosty morning, barefoot. When his wife, thinking to restrain a pro-

fuseness of almsgiving which his scanty salary could ill afford, made him a purse that could not be opened without a tedious manipulation, he gave away purse and all to the next applicant.

Samuel Moody, his son-in-law Joseph Emerson of Malden, and Daniel Bliss of Concord were prominent supporters of Whitefield and his revival in 1734; invited him into their pulpits, and were thought to favor his doctrine of immediate direction by the Holy Spirit.

William Emerson of Concord (Harvard College, 1761) was the builder of the Old Manse, celebrated by Hawthorne; he was living there when the British troops came up on the 19th of April, 1775, and wrote an account of the skirmish at the bridge, which his grandson published in the Appendix to the "Historical Discourse at Concord." He and his brother, the Reverend Joseph Emerson of Pepperell, had been active patriots before the war.[1] He preached to the minute-men, exhorting them to ready obedience to discipline, and assuring them that their resistance to invasion of their constitutional rights was true loyalty to "the principles which had advanced the House of Hanover to its unrivalled lustre." In August, 1776, he left Con-

[1] It is said their zeal carried them so far in contravention to the prevailing ideas of filial reverence that they rebuked their mother for drinking tea at the time of the general agreement against the use of it.

cord to join the army at Ticonderoga as chaplain, and died a few months later, of camp-fever.

His wife was Phebe Bliss (his "Phebe-bird" he calls her in one of his letters), daughter of the Reverend Daniel Bliss, his predecessor in the Concord pulpit, — "a flame of fire" his son-in-law calls him, in the epitaph on his tombstone: the introducer, says Shattuck, of a new style of preaching, "bold, zealous, impassioned, enthusiastic," which brought him into trouble with the lukewarm Arminianism of the day.

William Emerson of Concord, though he died at thirty-three, was a man of mark; a fervent patriot and leader in the patriotic movement of the day, as well as an eloquent preacher. "A public character [says Miss Mary Emerson, his daughter], passing the old church, said, 'There I first heard eloquence.'" He was noted for his beautiful reading of the hymns, and he seems to have had much of his father's literary tastes. Writing to his wife on his way to the camp, he encloses some verses, and says: "For my part, I'm not sure, but for that old mangler of words, Mr. Wooster, I should have been a considerable poet; methinks there are the outlines of a fine rhymester in the enclosed; and you must try to think so, if it is only to gratify my vanity and please the children."

In William, his oldest child and only son (as

well as in his daughter, Mary Moody), the love of good letters and a hunger for literary society were prominent traits. After his father's death, — his mother having married the Reverend Ezra Ripley, and another set of children growing up in the Concord Manse, — William Emerson the second was left very early dependent on his own exertions. He went through the usual course of school-keeping, college (Harvard College, 1789), school-keeping again; then, after a few months' study of divinity at Cambridge, was admitted to preach, and, at the age of twenty-three, ordained minister of Harvard, a town twelve miles from Concord. It is said he had no predilection for the ministry, but yielded upon hearing Dr. Ripley pray that his mother's strong desire that he should be a minister might be fulfilled. He had no relish for the country seclusion to which for a while, at least, he must look forward. "The situation [he writes to a friend] is apparently too circumscribed and remote for present gratification. My retirement hides me from the intercourse of all humanized beings; yet I believe Harvard, on the whole, is the most eligible place, at present, in the universe."

He was not entirely cut off from human intercourse, for he was well received at Mr. Bromfield's,[1] Squire Kimball's, Mrs. Grosvenor's, and

[1] Mr. Bromfield was not the Squire of Harvard, in the New England sense, but the account of him in Mrs. Quincy's diary

other houses, where he found agreeable society. And he seems to have found sympathizers with a taste he had for music, for he reproaches himself with spending too much time in singing and in playing on the bass-viol, an instrument, I believe, not used for solo performance. But probably there was not much talk of books, — few to discuss with him the literary and scientific novelties by the last ship from England. Then, with his meagre salary, he was "too poor to keep a horse," — a serious obstacle in those days to intercourse with his brother ministers. He was decidedly of a social turn; too accessible, he thought, and in danger of forgetting the reserve of manner that belonged to his cloth. He reminds himself in his journal "to be more free with my hat and less with my hand." Some extracts from a letter he wrote to Mrs. Grosvenor,

seems to show some traits of the English squirarchy still surviving in New England at the beginning of the century: "Mr. Bromfield and his surroundings vividly reminded Mrs. Quincy of Addison's description of Sir Roger de Coverley in the *Spectator*. It seemed to her that she must be on a visit to that worthy knight, — especially on Sunday, when, equipped with a red cloak and a wig surmounted by a cocked hat, and attended by his negro servant Othello, he escorted her under the ancient avenue of elms and through the grave-yard to the village church. Profound deference and respect marked the passing salutations he received, and, at the conclusion of the service, the whole congregation remained standing in their pews until Mr. Bromfield and his guests had walked down the broad aisle." (*Memoirs of the Life of Mrs. Eliza S. M. Quincy.* Boston, 1861: p. 93.)

the widow of his predecessor at Harvard, while he was considering the invitation to settle there, may serve to paint the situation of the young candidate: —

CONCORD, *January* 28, 1792.

MADAM, — How checkered is life! How uncertain, how various, the state of humanity! At Harvard my days flew rapidly away. Charming variety characterized each week. While the hours of day wore the serious aspect of study, the gay moments of eve brought humor and cheerfulness into our circle. But no sooner did I leave your social fire, no sooner did the rocks and woods of Harvard, on that beautiful morn, disappear, than cold black clouds of doubt and suspense overshadowed my mind, which, ever since, hath been the sport of opinion and the dupe of advice. On the Saturday following, I broke the path through pathless woods and over hills of everlasting snow, to Newbury. At night I supped in a room that was not warmed with more fire than I could have comfortably slept with in my bed. Bed! as to that I will say nothing; for my weight made no more impression on it than would a walnut, which, I imagine, might have been cracked on it to advantage. In the morning, frozen to death, I went to their meeting-house; which, for age and deformity, beggars all description. When I was in the pulpit, I could see nothing of what was trans-

acted below; and, in the galleries, nobody appeared to converse with me. The case was somewhat remedied when I took the stand; for there I made shift to get hold of the cushion, which, as I stood, was about up to my armpits. Thus elevated, I peeked over and made many discoveries among the people scattered hither and thither around the antiquated walls. What was wanting in prospect, however, I endeavored to supply by my vociferation, and, like Jonah, at a goodly distance I proclaimed the terrors of the law. Tuesday and Wednesday I have been freezing along back. This is the day appointed [for some ceremony at Dr. Ripley's church in Concord], and lo! the winds and snow seem emulous which shall contribute most to disappoint my pleasure, or throw obstacles in the way of my return. Not only so, but journeys, horses, and stages have emptied my pockets. But, you say, madam, I was to tell you when I should return, and with what aspect I should come. Do not ask me. I can assure you, Mrs. Grosvenor, so far as this: that should I leave Harvard, I should not entertain the most distant hope, scarcely, of settling at Newbury, were it ever so agreeable. The people are amazingly divided. They are old and they are crafty. They do not keep good fires at Newbury. They keep noble fires at Harvard. Yes, madam, but will they keep me a good fire? I think thirty cords of wood

would be as pretty a supplement to this little paper in my pocket as they could possibly publish. I cannot, however, think of being buried. And yet a man might read as many hours in a day at Harvard as at Newbury or any other place. In short, madam, my mind, like the air of this day, is torn by constant winds; I scarcely know how or what to think.

He decided to remain at Harvard, upon a salary fixed at first at $333.30, — not a large sum even for those days, and constantly diminishing in value with the progressive depreciation of the currency. I suppose he had no rent to pay, and his "benefactions," that is, presents from the wealthier parishioners, — a leg of pork from Squire Kimball, a load of wood from Mr. Bromfield, "the outside of my gown" from Mrs. Grosvenor, — together with wedding-fees, might add perhaps half as much. Still it was but a small pittance for a man who felt it necessary to spend sometimes in the quarter-year more than his quarter's salary on books. He felt that he must "never name marriage or building." Nevertheless I find in his diary that in June, 1796, he "rode out with Miss R. H., and talked with her on the subject of matrimony;" and, on the 25th of October, "was married to the pious and amiable Ruth Haskins, fifth daughter of Mr. John Haskins of Rainsford's Lane [Harrison Avenue], Boston,"

and brought her home to a farm which he had bought and made ready a few months before.

Henceforward, though I do not find that his wife brought him any immediate accession of fortune, all complaints of poverty, disquietude about debts, regret at his want of frugality, and resolutions "to obtain a better living in Harvard or go elsewhere," disappear from his journal; as if he foresaw the dawn of his deliverance. "We are poor and cold, and have little meal, and little wood, and little meat, but, thank God, courage enough."

This was not the courage of heedlessness; he was careful and methodical, a great admirer of order, and thrifty except in the article of books: it was an unconquerable buoyancy of disposition, that would not let him believe that any real misfortune could come to him. Years afterwards, just before his death, writing almost gaily to Dr. Ripley about the perplexities of the physicians over his case, he says: "You will think me better, because of the levity with which this page is blurred. Threads of this levity have been interwoven with the entire web of my life."

Meanwhile, he did not idly trust in Providence, but put his shoulder to the wheel, sold the bass-viol, took boarders, kept school, and worked with his own hands on the farm. After many rebuffs, and even being "reviled at town-meeting," he at last prevailed upon the town (then the same per-

sons with the parish) to add two hundred and fifty dollars to his salary, only to bring it up, in purchasing value, to what it had been at first.

At length, in the spring of 1799, the deliverer appeared in the shape of a committee of the First Church of Boston. He had been invited to preach there, and also to preach the annual sermon on the solemn occasion of choosing officers for the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company. A week afterwards, a committee of the church came up to sound him with regard to a removal to Boston, and, receiving some encouragement, addressed a letter to the Harvard church, requesting his release from his engagement there. In this letter they urge as a motive for compliance that "the alarming attacks upon our holy religion, by the Learned, the Witty, and the Wicked, especially in populous and seaport towns, call aloud to invite and support, in the places of most eminence, such spiritual workmen as are endowed with talents to convince and confound the Wicked by their arguments, and allure them by their amiable behavior." The Harvard church replied, through a committee appointed in town-meeting, setting forth the dangers and inconveniences of a step so novel if not unprecedented, and suggesting that in case of compliance they ought to receive $1,300 by way of compensation for the increased taxes which the pewholders might be compelled to pay. Finally, after

a negotiation lasting all summer, "the committee of Harvard," writes William Emerson in his journal, "conclude to take $1,000 and let me go." He preached his farewell sermon on the 15th of September, and entered upon his duties at the Old Brick on the 22d.

The test of sermons being the effect upon those who hear them, the qualities in William Emerson that wrought this change in his fortunes may be better estimated, perhaps, through the accounts of his contemporaries than by reading the Artillery-Election discourse. The Reverend Joseph Stevens Buckminster, in his funeral sermon, says of him: "He was a happy example of that correct and rational style of evangelical preaching of which the yet lamented Clarke [Emerson's predecessor] has left so fair a specimen." The Reverend Dr. John Pierce, who never missed an Artillery-Election sermon or a Thursday lecture, says:[1] "He was considered an extraordinary preacher; he had a melodious voice; his elocution was remarkable for distinctness, yet had an easy flow. In prayer he was fluent, but his expressions were often too studied for a common audience. His sermons were greatly labored, yet very perspicuous. He could not endure the fashion, which at times prevails, of writing in a desultory manner. He would some-

[1] *Sprague's Annals of the American Pulpit*, viii. 243, and Dr. Pierce's MSS. diary in the library of the Massachusetts Historical Society.

times employ words which were not common, but he was particularly desirous that they should be classical."

All accounts agree in praising his voice and his skill in reading. As to his success in the particular task for which he was summoned to the First Church, namely, resistance to the increasing laxity in religion, the question involves the previous one, whether the cause of true religion at the time and place was best served by drawing tighter the bonds of orthodoxy or by loosening them still farther. And whichever way this point might be decided, the testimony as to the actual tendency of his doctrine is by no means concordant. Dr. Pierce speaks with some asperity of his "latitudinarianism;" Dr. Charles Lowell, on the other hand, does not think him so extreme as some of his brethren. It is clear from what he writes in 1806, about the middle of his Boston pastorate, to his half-brother, Samuel Ripley, at Washington, that he was no stickler for forms and dogmas: —

"If I had not left Harvard for Boston, it was my intention to leave it for Washington, where I designed to plant a church strictly on congregational principles; in which there was to be no written expression of faith, no covenant, and no subscription whatever to articles, as a term of communion. It was my plan, and still would be, in forming a new church, to administer the rituals of

Christianity to all who would observe them, without any profession except such observance."

In personal appearance, Dr. Lowell says he was "a handsome man, rather tall, of fair complexion, with cheeks slightly tinted; his motions easy, graceful, and gentlemanlike; his manners bland and pleasant. He was an honest man, and expressed himself decidedly and emphatically, but never bluntly or vulgarly."

Upon his acceptance of their call, the First Church voted "that Mr. Emerson receive, for his encouragement and support, at the rate of fourteen dollars per week; also the parish dwelling-house, and twenty cords of wood." This provision was gradually raised, until, in 1809, it was fixed at twenty-five dollars a week, and thirty cords of wood. To the parish dwelling-house was attached, as I have said, a garden, in which the minister planted his potatoes, sweet-corn, and peas, as he had done at Harvard.

The Boston salary, modest enough when measured by the standards of the present day, afforded the means for a more unencumbered style of living, and even for gradually discharging some debts that he had brought with him, though hardly for making any provision for the future. He went a good deal into society, — "dined abroad" and "had company" are frequent entries in his diary; and he sometimes complains that these agreeable

avocations consumed too much of his time. But the desire for congenial companionship was strong in him, and for this the little provincial metropolis afforded fair opportunity. The scholarship that some of the early immigrants brought with them had mostly died out, but the love of good letters still remained, and it was beginning to feel its way towards some expression. The Massachusetts Historical Society had lately been founded, and had encouraged "the establishment of a weekly paper, to be called the *American Apollo*, in which will be given the result of their inquiries into the natural, political, and ecclesiastical history of this country."[1] Mr. Emerson was an active member of the society; and also "converses about the Physiological Society," — which holds its first meeting (as the Philosophical Society) December 10, 1801, at Dr. James Jackson's.

"April 9th, lecture before the Philosophical Society, and break two phials." In 1803, "The Philosophical Society wonderfully flourishes. Thank God that this child of my brain is fostered, and promises to grow to mature age."

His chief literary enterprise, however, was the *Monthly Anthology*, with its foster-child the Boston Athenæum. He took charge of the *Anthology* in 1804, six months after its first establishment, and called in aid a number of his friends,

[1] *Collections of the Massachusetts Historical Society*, vol. i.

sixteen in all, forming the Anthology Club, which met once a week to project and discuss (with a modest supper) articles for the magazine. Dr. John Sylvester John Gardiner, Rector of Trinity Church, was the first President; William Emerson, Vice-President; several of the members were Liberal ministers; all were liberal in sentiment, but all doubtless good Federalists. Mrs. Lee, in her memoir of the Buckminsters, says that the Boston ladies would not invite company on Anthology evening, because it robbed them of the presence of the most agreeable gentlemen. The society, says President Quincy,[1] "maintained its existence with reputation for about six years, and issued ten octavo volumes from the press; constituting one of the most lasting and honorable monuments of the taste and literature of the period." And so it is, for it shows a proportion of scholarly men among the busy lawyers, doctors, and merchants of the little town, hardly equalled since. We find in it literary essays by Judge Parsons, Daniel Webster, Dr. Jacob Bigelow, Dr. John Collins Warren, Dr. James Jackson, James Perkins; poems of Judge Story and John Quincy Adams; as well as literary contributions of scholars and of clergymen of various faiths, among them Cheverus, the Roman Catholic bishop. The tone of the *Anthology* was very liberal in religion, but conser-

[1] *History of the Boston Athenæum*, Boston, 1851, p. 3.

vative in politics and in literature; aiming, one of the writers said, "to apply caustic and lancet to the disorders of the American press," and stoutly opposed to the new school of poetry in England. Scott was eagerly welcomed, and extracts are given, in advance of re-publication, from his poems; but to Coleridge Dr. Gardiner applies the epithet "asinine," and he speaks of "the dull malignity" of Southey.

Of yet more lasting importance was the collection of books begun by the Club, on Mr. Emerson's motion, and growing into the Boston Athenæum Library. Already at Harvard he had started a public library, to which he gave his services as librarian; and when the new meeting-house was built in Chauncy Place he persuaded the church to form a theological library in the vestry.

With his social and literary activities and distinctions he had his share of the public honors that came naturally to a prominent member of the New England aristocracy, the class held in honor apart from wealth or political station. He was Fourth-of-July orator in 1802, chaplain of the State Senate (in 1803) and of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company, overseer of Harvard College, a guest of the town authorities on all great occasions, besides being invited to join them when they refreshed themselves with an excursion in the harbor, and visited the forts, or landed on Lovell's Island for a game of quoits.

His sister, Mary Moody Emerson, who had in her more of the tense Moody fibre, — though she sympathized with his literary tastes, wrote for the *Anthology*, and was drawn to his house in Boston from time to time by her "desire to hear the men talk," — did not fail to warn him in her letters that these "tributes to fashion and parade are hostile to the perpetual claims of simplicity, reason, and piety." She feared that the "sultry air and diet of the town have dimmed the light of genius," and that "the present world is too real to you." It was indeed very real to him: "an ample and beautiful world," he writes in his diary, "in which there has been afforded to me on earth a pleasant lot and much happiness, many worthy friends and such delightful contemplations."

No shadow came over his life, except the deaths of two children (Phebe Ripley, born at Harvard, died 1800 at Boston; and John Clarke, died 1807), until in the spring of 1811, the twelfth year of his ministry at the First Church, "a consuming marasmus," vainly combated for some months, cut it short at the age of forty-two (May 12, 1811).[1]

A short time before his death he says in a letter to his sister Mary: —

"To my wife and children, indeed, my continu-

[1] His comrades of the Ancient and Honorable Artillery Company attended the funeral under arms. Emerson well remembered his delight at the military pomp.

ance upon earth is a matter of moment; as, in the event of my decease, God only knows how they would subsist. And then the education of the latter! But I am not oppressed with this solicitude. Our family, you know, have so long been in the habit of trusting Providence, that none of them ever seriously thought of providing a terrestrial maintenance for themselves and households."

It was in truth a heavy burden that fell upon the widow in her affliction, with scanty means of support, and six children, all under ten years of age. After the first two, above mentioned, there had been born to them William, 1801; Ralph Waldo, May 25, 1803; at which date the following entry appears in his father's diary: —

"Mr. Puffer preached his Election Sermon to great acceptance. This day also, whilst I was at dinner at Governor Strong's, my son Ralph Waldo was born. Mrs. E. well. Club at Mr. Adams'."

Afterwards, three sons: Edward Bliss (1805), Robert Bulkeley (1807), Charles Chauncy (1808); and a daughter, Mary Caroline (1811, died 1814).

The First Church did their part: they continued the minister's salary to his widow for six months, and then voted to pay her five hundred dollars a year for seven years, and also to give her the use of the parish house for a year and a half, unless the society should have occasion for it for parish

purposes. She remained there, in fact, more than three years.

With this aid, and with the occasional assistance of "kind friends," she managed to keep the household together in Boston until the older boys began to earn their living. She would have preferred a less expensive place; but the children must be educated, — "they were born to be educated," their aunt Mary said. Some of them, at least, their mother hoped would be ministers; at any rate, they must be kept within reach of the Latin School and of Harvard College. And this she accomplished, though with sore travail. She took boarders into her house, rose early and sat up late, doing much of the work herself, with the help of the children as they grew old enough, and with occasional aid from her sister-in-law, Miss Mary Emerson; and so kept the wolf from the door, though never far off. William, the oldest son, writing to his mother in after-years, when these straits were past, says: —

"Our circumstances have been such that the increase of expense which would necessarily have attended upon the sickness of any one of us might have reduced us to real distress. We have never suffered this."

It was only escaped by unremitting exertion and a frugality that left its mark in many ways upon the growing boys. A friend of the family (Mrs. Ripley), coming in one day, found them without

food, and Miss Emerson consoling them with stories of heroic endurance. Ralph (as he was then called) and Edward had but one great-coat between them, and had to take turns in going without, and in bearing the taunts of vulgar-minded school-fellows inquiring: "Whose turn is it to wear the coat to-day?"

The boys did much of the housework, and had but little opportunity for play or relaxation of any kind. Nothing in the way of relaxation, to be sure, entered much into the plan of life of these excellent women. If the boys had any time to spare, it might be better employed than in mere amusement. They might be reading good, improving books, such as Whelpley's Historical Compend, or Jebb's Sermons, or even Rollin or Robertson. A constant intellectual stimulus was added to that of outward circumstances. Their father, in the midst of his various activities, never neglected their lessons. During a short absence from home he writes to his wife: "William [aged five] will recite to you as he does to me, if you have leisure to hear him, a sentence of English grammar before breakfast, — though I think, if only one can be attended to, Ralph [aged three] should be that one." And he "hopes that John Clarke [aged seven] can repeat passages from Addison, Shakespeare, Milton, Pope, etc."

The tradition was kept up by their aunt, Mary

Moody Emerson, a remarkable person, of whom her nephew has left a sketch,[1] somewhat softened by the veneration in which he never ceased to hold her. She united with the Moody enthusiasm and impetuosity and a good share of Puritan rigor a keen appreciation of modern ideas. In one of his letters, long afterwards, when she had quarrelled with him for his "high, airy speculations," and would not see him or even come into the town where he was, he writes: —

"Give my love to her, — love and honor. She must always occupy a saint's place in my household; and I have no hour of poetry or philosophy, since I knew these things, into which she does not enter as a genius."

She was a very strange saint, and exemplified the exaltation of faith over works to an extent that made her hard to live with. She idolized her nephews, set no bounds to her expectations from them, and showed, particularly when they were at a distance, a tender affection, — which, however, did not prevent her from turning upon the least appearance of weakness with the bitterest scoffs; and her imperious temper could tolerate no difference in opinion, even when she could not help secretly respecting it. This made her an uncomfortable inmate, — uncomfortable to herself as to others. Em-

[1] *Collected Writings*, x. 373. The references to Mr. Emerson's writings are uniformly to the Riverside edition.

erson wrote of her: "She tramples on the common humanities all day, and they rise as ghosts and torment her at night." And she says of herself: "I love to be a vessel of cumbersomeness to society." Yet her genuine and habitual elevation of view, her really superior mind, and her keen sensibility to every kind of merit made her a commanding influence in their lives.

"And so, though we flout her and contradict her and compassionate her whims, we all stand in awe of her penetration, her indignant, eloquent conscience, her poetic and commanding reason."

"I doubt [he writes upon another occasion] if the interior of spiritual history in New England could be trulier told than through the exhibition of family history such as this: the picture of this group of M. M. E. and the boys, mainly Charles. The key to her life is in the conflict of the new and the old ideas in New England. The heir of whatever was rich and profound and efficient in thought and emotion in the old religion which planted and peopled this land, she strangely united to this passionate piety the fatal gift of penetration, a love of philosophy, an impatience of words; and was thus a religious skeptic. She held on with both hands to the faith of the past generation, as to the palladium of all that was good and hopeful in the physical and metaphysical worlds; and in all companies and on all occasions, and especially

with these darling nephews of her hope and pride, extolled and poeticized this beloved Calvinism. Yet all the time she doubted and denied it, and could not tell whether to be more glad or sorry to find that these boys were irremediably born to the adoption and furtherance of the new ideas. She reminds me of Margaret Graeme, the enthusiast in Scott's 'Abbot,' who lives to infuse into the young Roland her enthusiasm for the Roman Church, — only that our Margaret doubted while she loved. Milton and Young were the poets endeared to the generation she represented. Of Milton they were proud; but I fancy their religion has never found so faithful a picture as in the 'Night Thoughts.' These combined traits in M. M. E.'s character gave the new direction to her hope that these boys should be richly and holily qualified and bred to purify the old faith of what narrowness and error adhered to it, and import all its fire into the new age. Such a gift should her Prometheus bring to men. She hated the poor, low, thin, unprofitable, unpoetical humanitarians, and never wearies with piling on them new terms of slight and weariness."

To the boys, from their childhood up, she was an ever-present embodiment of the Puritan conscience; at their side, or in searching letters, when her disgust at the town and at her own outbursts drove her away to her country solitude, yet also a constant stimulus to go beyond the Puritan limita-

tions, which she would allow no one to praise but herself. And the conflict in her own life no doubt communicated itself in some degree to theirs. Her ambition for them was above all thought for worldly success, and she was prompt to jeer at any symptom of "a frivolous desire for fame," or of "sensitiveness to the sympathies of society." Yet, as her brother William had felt obliged to admonish her, she was not without "a plentiful share of family pride;" which showed itself, as he complains, in "the gentle insinuation that my name is never to be splendid. It is not enough that your relatives should be good husbands and wives, good neighbors and friends, but they must be called of men Rabbis and Fathers."

Her secret dream was that her beloved nephews should be intellectual, learned, poetical, eloquent; honored of men and the darlings of "the world" of Boston, that they might bear it up into a higher atmosphere. They were born to distinction, that was plain; but it must be laid as a worthy offering on the altar of religion.

Meanwhile, her counsels of perfection for both worlds helped to bring a strain upon these delicate organizations which they could ill endure. In the two elder it was alleviated by a certain impassivity of temperament and an admixture (in Ralph, at least) of what their father called "levity," and Ralph afterwards, in his college days, "silliness,"

— we may call it humor, — the habit of detaching his impressions from himself, and looking at them from the outside, as a by-stander. Possibly, in his case, seclusion from the companionships and the pastimes of boyhood may have supplied a needed check to what he calls, in one of his early journals, "my cardinal vice of intellectual dissipation:" any way, he appears to have thought so. For Edward and Charles, at all events, the concentration was not needed; and "the iron band of poverty, of necessity, of austerity" (of which he speaks in the essay on "Domestic Life"),[1] together with "the pressure of I know not how many literary atmospheres," which Dr. Furness found there, we may well suppose intensified into disease what was already intense enough. In Ralph's case the drawback came in another shape. Want of "that part of education which is conducted in the nursery and the playground, in fights and frolics, in business and politics," — leaving him without the help of the free-masonries which these things establish, — no doubt exaggerated the idealist's tendency to fence himself off from contact with men, and made it an effort for him in after-life to meet them on common terms in every-day intercourse.

For better or worse they were thrown upon themselves; partly from the austere fashion of domestic

[1] *Collected Writings*, vii. 117.

intercourse in those days. Their father appears to have been a kindly, affectionate man, but Ralph's chief recollection of him was as "a somewhat social gentleman, but severe to his children, who twice or thrice put me in mortal terror by forcing me into the salt water, off some wharf or bathing-house; and I still recall the fright with which, after some of these salt experiences, I heard his voice one day (as Adam that of the Lord God in the garden) summoning me to a new bath, and I vainly endeavoring to hide myself."

Even his mother, the most loving of women, was so far from making them feel her tenderness that once, when he and William had wandered off upon some holiday and spent the day away from home, they were much surprised, on their return, at her exclaiming: "My sons, I have been in an agony for you!" "I went to bed," he says, "in bliss at the interest she showed."

A letter from Ralph, when he was about ten years old, to his aunt Mary, gives account of one of their days: —

BOSTON, *April* 16, 1813.

DEAR AUNT, — I am much obliged to you for your kind letter. I mean now to give you an account of what I do commonly in one day, if that is what you meant by giving an account of one single day in my life. Friday, 9th, I choose for the day of telling what I did. In the Morning I rose, as I

commonly do, about five minutes before six. I then help Wm. in making the fire, after which I set the table for Prayers. I then call mamma about quarter after six. We spell as we did before you went away. I confess I often feel an angry passion start in one corner of my heart when one of my Brothers gets above me, which I think sometimes they do by unfair means, after which we eat our breakfast; then I have from about quarter after seven till eight to play or read. I think I am rather inclined to the former. I then go to school, where I hope I can say I study more than I did a little while ago. I am in another book called Virgil, and our class are even with another which came to the Latin School one year before us. After attending this school I go to Mr. Webb's private school, where I write and cipher. I go to this place at eleven and stay till one o'clock. After this, when I come home I eat my dinner, and at two o'clock I resume my studies at the Latin School, where I do the same except in studying grammar. After I come home I do mamma her little errands if she has any; then I bring in my wood to supply the breakfast room. I then have some time to play and eat my supper. After that we say our hymns or chapters, and then take our turns in reading Rollin, as we did before you went. We retire to bed at different times. I go at a little after eight, and retire to my private devotions, and then close my

eyes in sleep, and there ends the toils of the day. . . . I have sent a letter to you in a Packet bound to Portland, which I suppose you have not received, as you made no mention of it in your letter to mamma. Give my love to Aunt Haskins and Aunt Ripley, with Robert and Charles and all my cousins, and I hope you will send me an answer to this the first opportunity, and believe me, I remain your most dutiful Nephew,

R. WALDO EMERSON.

It must not be supposed, however, that the household, with all its austerities, was a gloomy one. There was in the mother a native serenity that nothing could deeply disturb. "Her mind and her character," says Dr. N. L. Frothingham,[1] "were of a superior order, and they set their stamp upon manners of peculiar softness and natural grace and quiet dignity. Her sensible and kindly speech was always as good as the best instruction; and her smile, though it was always ready, was a reward. Her dark, liquid eyes, from which old age could not take away the expression, will be among the remembrances of all on whom they ever rested." Her sister-in-law, Mary Emerson, who, as she says of herself, "was never patient with the faults of the good," says of her: —

"When first she grew up, I knew her to be

[1] *Christian Examiner*, January, 1854.

without comparison. I continued to see her for some years, and thought her looks, words, actions, the sweetest, wisest, fittest, chastest of all. . . . In a new situation [after her marriage], she sustained any occasional trial of temper with a dignity and firmness and good sense that I shall ever respect, and obtained a greater influence than is common over one of the best of husbands. Since, in the trials of boarders, the most I could say would not be too much."

And in the younger members of the household there was a buoyancy of spirit that seemed, to their stern aunt Mary, excessive; their mirth and frivolity, she feared, "had too much influence even with their mother, and made her too often a party to folly." Their cousin, George Barrell Emerson, who found a home there at a later period, just before their removal from Boston, says:[1] —

"Among the sons I found William, whom I had long known and loved, the best reader, and with the sweetest voice I ever heard, and a pleasant talker; Ralph Waldo, whom I had known and admired, and whom all the world now knows almost as well as I do; Edward Bliss, the most modest and genial, the most beautiful and the most graceful, speaker, a universal favorite; and Charles Chauncy, bright and ready, full of sense, ambitious of distinction and capable of it. There never was a more delightful family."

[1] *Reminiscences of an Old Teacher*, Boston, 1878, p. 59.

The passage in "Domestic Life" referred to above is so clearly a reminiscence of their family circle that I will insert it here: —

"Who has not seen, and who can see unmoved, under a low roof, the eager, blushing boys discharging as they can their household chores, and hastening into the sitting-room to the study of to-morrow's merciless lesson, yet stealing time to read one chapter more of the novel hardly smuggled into the tolerance of father and mother, — atoning for the same by some passages of Plutarch or Goldsmith; the warm sympathy with which they kindle each other in school-yard, or barn, or wood-shed, with scraps of poetry or song, with phrases of the last oration or mimicry of the orator; the youthful criticism, on Sunday, of the sermons; the school declamation, faithfully rehearsed at home, sometimes to the fatigue, sometimes to the admiration, of sisters; the first solitary joys of literary vanity, when the translation or the theme has been completed, sitting alone near the top of the house; the cautious comparison of the attractive advertisement of the arrival of Macready, Booth, or Kemble, or of the discourse of a well-known speaker, with the expense of the entertainment; the affectionate delight with which they greet the return of each one after the early separations which school or business requires; the foresight with which, during such absences, they hive the honey which opportunity offers,

for the ear and imagination of the others; and the unrestrained glee with which they disburden themselves of their early mental treasures when the holidays bring them again together? What is the hoop that holds them stanch? It is the iron band of poverty, of necessity, of austerity, which, excluding them from the sensual enjoyments which make other boys too early old, has directed their activity into safe and right channels, and made them, despite themselves, reverers of the grand, the beautiful, and the good. Ah, short-sighted students of books, of nature, and of man! too happy could they know their advantages, they pine for freedom from that mild parental yoke; they sigh for fine clothes, for rides, for the theatre, and premature freedom and dissipation which others possess. Woe to them if their wishes were crowned! The angels that dwell with them, and are weaving laurels of life for their youthful brows, are Toil and Want and Truth and Mutual Faith."

And another passage in the same volume (p. 280), of the boy reading Plato, covered to his chin with a cloak, in a cold upper chamber, and associating the Dialogues ever after with a woollen smell, is evidently another of their experiences; Edward's, most likely, at a somewhat later time.

Ralph's school-days began before he was three years old; not an unusual thing at that time, when the school-room took the place of the nursery. His

mother writes, March 9, 1806: "William and Ralph now go again to Mrs. Whitwell's school," in Summer Street, near the parsonage. May 17th, his father writes: "Ralph does not read very well yet." Dr. Furness remembers him somewhat later under Miss Nancy Dickson, at the same school; whence they passed on together to the school of Lawson Lyon, "a severe teacher, whose ruler and cowskin did active service," says Mr. Samuel Bradford,[1] another school-fellow and member of the "three of us" who, Emerson writes nearly seventy years afterwards, "have agreed not to grow old, certainly not to each other."

In 1813 Emerson entered the Latin School, which, he says, was then on its wanderings whilst the school-house was rebuilding, first to the Mill Pond (since filled up, and now Haymarket Square and the adjoining tract between North and South Margin streets), where the beach-birds were piping over the flats; then to an attic on Pemberton Hill. The headmastership soon afterwards devolved upon Mr. Benjamin Apthorp Gould, "an excellent master, who loved a good scholar and waked his ambition. One day in 1814 Mr. Gould informed the school that there was a rumor that the British were going to send a fleet to Boston Harbor, and it was desired that the boys of the school should come one day to assist in throwing up defences on Noddle's Island.

[1] *Bradford Memoirs* (privately printed), Phil., 1880, pp. 36, 61.

All who were able and willing should go the next day at nine o'clock to the bottom of Hanover Street, where a boat would be in waiting to carry them to the island. The whole school went. I went, but I confess I cannot remember a stroke of work that I or my school-fellows accomplished. Mr. Gould in his first years encouraged the boys to found a school library, which was immediately set on foot. One of his virtues I recall often, — that he required us to learn by heart verses of Homer; which I doubt not some of us kept in mind and could repeat long after we forgot their meaning. Mr. Gould valued good speaking, and the Saturday morning was devoted to it. Edward Greeley Loring, now Judge Loring of Washington, was the best speaker." [1]

Judge Loring, in a kind reply to my request for his recollections of Emerson, says: "I do not remember anything salient enough in Emerson's school life to serve your purpose. He was always a good scholar because honestly studious, but not eminent. His compositions were graceful and correct; this made their quality, and I think describes his exercises at college as well as at school. He began at school to be critical in expression, and grew more and more so through his college life. In school and college he was liked for his equable temper and fairness, but was not demonstrative

[1] MSS. notes for the speech at the Latin School celebration, November 8, 1876.

enough to be eminently popular. . . . He was not vigorous in body, and therefore not a champion in athletic sports; but I do not remember that he shunned play or boyish fun. . . . My clearest recollection is that Emerson was singularly free from faults, and this was the substratum for his subsequent expansion in character and intellect."

Dr. Furness says: "We were at the Boston Latin School together. From eleven to twelve every day we went to a private school kept by Mr. Webb, master of one of the public grammar schools. After the public school was dismissed, Mr. Webb had a few boys who came to him, chiefly to learn to write.[1] Ralph and I used to sit together. I can see him now, at his copy-book; quite a laborious operation it appeared, as his tongue worked up and down with his pen. But then, thank Heaven! he never had any talent for anything, — nothing but pure genius, which talents would have overlaid. Then it was that he wrote verses on the naval victories of the war of 1812. He wrote in verse also a history or romance, — or was it an epic? — entitled 'Fortus,' which I have a dim remembrance of having illustrated.[2] I think Waldo repaid my admiration of his verses with his

[1] Emerson remembered playing truant for some time in this midday interval, and being punished for it by imprisonment on bread and water.

[2] *Fortus*, with Dr. Furness's illustrations, still survives, in the possession of the Rev. Daniel Noyes at Byfield.

for my pictures. He was rather jealous of any amendments that I ventured to suggest. At the Latin School his favorite piece for declamation was from the 'Pleasures of Hope,' 'Warsaw's Last Champion,' etc. This passage is a telephone to my ears. I hear the ringing of his voice."

In his last school year Ralph more than once delivered "original poems" on exhibition days, and some of his "themes" so pleased Mr. Gould that he kept them to show to the school committee.[1] "Those days," says Dr. Furness, "may be distinguished as the era of rhetoric; we boys went into ecstasies over a happy turn of expression or a brilliant figure of speech. The Everetts, John and Edward, were the demigods. I remember Waldo's telling me of the making-up after a quarrel between William and his classmate John Everett, and quoting with great admiration a passage in Everett's note about 'trifles which children resent and boys magnify;' and one from a sermon by Mr. N. L. Frothingham, the young pastor of First Church, of the doctrine that represents man as 'coming into the world girt in the poison robes of hereditary depravity, and with the curses of his Maker upon his head.' These were the things than which we

[1] One of these (on Astronomy) I find among Emerson's papers. One night, crossing Boston Common, then an open expanse, he had been much impressed by the sight of the stars, and resolved to take this subject for his next school composition.

thought nothing could be finer. I suppose it was the impressiveness of Waldo's tones that has caused me to remember them."

There are several specimens of his verse-making about this time; perhaps the most favorable is the translation from Virgil given by Mr. Cooke.[1] In general they show some facility at rhyming, without much appearance of any other aim. His gift of rhyming was a matter of modest family pride among the brothers, and he was often called upon to exercise it in writing to them when they were separated. In his letters to Edward, who was away from home at the Phillips Academy at Andover, he often passes into verse, as for instance: —

"The other day, while scouring knives, I began to hum away that verse, —

Harp of Memnon, sweetly strung, etc.,

but I really did not think that the harsh melody of the knives sounded quite so sweet as the harp.

Melodious knife, and thou, harmonious sand,
Touched by the poet scourer's rugged hand,
When swift ye glide along the scouring-board,
With music's note your happy bard reward."

In 1814, the coastwise trade being cut off by the enemy's cruisers, the price of provisions went so high in Boston — flour $17 a barrel, and rice and meal in proportion — that the family were driven out to Concord, where they passed the year with

[1] *Ralph Waldo Emerson.* By George Willis Cooke. Boston, 1881: p. 18.

Dr. Ripley. At the peace Ralph writes to his brother William, who was then in college: —

CONCORD, *February* 24, 1815.

MY DEAR BROTHER, — What a change has taken place in the times since I saw you last, and how happy is the change! But a little while since and the cry of war was heard in every place, but now

> Fair Peace triumphant blooms on golden wings,
> And War no more of all his Victories sings.

When the news reached this place a smile was on every face and joy in every heart. On the 22d instant the steeple of the court-house here was illuminated, and appeared very brilliant from this house. When I came to see you, you did not pack up your Cicero's Orations in the bundle, and I should like to have you send it the first opportunity in your bundle of clothes. To-day I get through the Incredibilibus Collectanea.

> And now, dear William, with a rhyme I 'll close,
> For you are tired, I may well suppose.
> Besides, we soon shall hear the nightly bell
> For prayers, — so now farewell.

Yours affectionately, RALPH.

His rhyming powers appear to have been discovered at the school in Concord, and when he left he was made to mount a barrel, and recite by way of farewell an original ode, of which he used to repeat for the delectation of his children whatever scraps he could remember, beginning: —

I rise to bid adieu
To you, my schoolmates, and, kind sir, to you.

He always recurred with much amusement to his brother Charles's disgust at being held up to school as, —

Another brother, small and younger too,
New to the school and to its studies new,
Hath here received instruction of that kind
To banish all its dulness from the mind.

The last two lines he thought particularly delightful.

On their return to Boston, having to seek a new dwelling-place, a house on Beacon Street, near the present site of the Boston Athenæum, was lent to Mrs. Emerson by the owner, who was going to Europe, she undertaking to provide board for his wife and family. In the yard there was room enough for a cow, which Dr. Ripley sent down from Concord, and which Emerson remembered driving round the Common to a pasture his mother had on Carver Street. In one of his letters (always by private hand) to Edward, who had just returned to his boarding-school, and "are likely to be dull, mother says, during the first weeks of your stay," he writes "as I suppose you expect me to, *poetice*," — describing the prospect from the basement, across the yard,

By boards and dirt and rubbish marr'd.
Upon the right a wicket gate,
The left appears a Jail of State.

Before, the view all boundless spreads,
And five tall chimneys lift their lofty heads.

The gate, I suppose, of the Granary Burying-Ground, and the County Jail on Court Street.

"Aunt's only message to you is, Be brave; that is, do not be cast down by thoughts of home. I have begun Telemachus in French at Miss Sales', and at home I am reading Priestley's 'Lectures on History.' Mother thinks you had better try to borrow 'Charles XII.' or some other history, to amuse you during vacation. But as even nonsense sounds good if cloth'd in the dress of Poetry, I believe I must resort to that as my last expedient: —

So erst two brethren climb'd the cloud capp'd hill,
Ill-fated Jack and long-lamented Jill,
Snatched from the crystal font its lucid store,
And in full pails the precious treasure bore.
But ah! by dull forgetfulness oppress'd
(Forgive me, Edward), I 've forgot the rest.

Yours, RALPH."

October 1, 1817, he writes: "Next Friday, you know, my college life begins, *Deo volente*, and I hope and trust will begin with determined and ardent pursuit of real knowledge that will raise me high in the class while in college, and qualify me well for stations of future usefulness. Aunt Betsey is very much grieved, she says, that I go to Cambridge instead of Providence, — you guess the reason. I hope going to Cambridge will not pre-

vent some future time my being as good a minister as if I came all Andovered from Providence," — namely, from Brown University, which aunt Betsey doubtless thought safer from the latitudinarianism that had crept into Cambridge.

## CHAPTER II.

### COLLEGE-LIFE. — SCHOOL-KEEPING. — PROSPECTS.

### 1817–1824.

In August, 1817, Emerson entered Harvard College. It had been decided that he should wait a while, — the family resources being then at their lowest ebb, — but, receiving through Mr. Gould the promise that he should be appointed "President's freshman," and perhaps be granted "other privileges," he presented himself, and passed, says his mother, "a very good examination, and was admitted without being admonished to study, as was the case with many."

The "President's freshman" was the messenger to summon delinquents and to announce to the students the orders of the Faculty. He had his lodging, free of charge, in the President's house, — the building now called Wadsworth House. Emerson's room (now the Bursar's office) was directly under the President's study. The other privileges appear, from a search of the archives obligingly ordered by President Eliot, to have been Emerson's appointment to the place of waiter at Commons, which relieved him of three fourths of the

cost of his board. Nothing further is mentioned in the official records, but the following letters to his brother William, who was keeping school at Kennebunk, Me., show that he received something from one of the scholarship funds: —

CAMBRIDGE, *February* 14, 1819.

DEAR WILLIAM: . . . You speak of mother's pecuniary exigencies at present; though pressing they are not distressful quite yet, though she is relying considerably on your assistance. . . . I brought twenty dollars from Waltham day before yesterday, besides your $3.50. The quarterly ten-dollar present from the "unknown friend" has been discontinued two quarters, which confirms mother's suspicion of Sheriff Bradford's being the source. The deacons, at the beginning of January, sent their compliments with a twenty-dollar bill for mother. . . . As to Cambridge news, the President's absence and attentions are principal. . . . Should you not like to have been witness of the meeting of the two Presidents at Washington? People appear to think that our President will do himself as much honor as a man of the world as he will as a literary character; and that Mr. Monroe in appearance is little more than a comfortable ploughman. . . .

*February* 15. This morning I received the very important intelligence that I was appointed waiter

(for the first time, you know). I am to wait in the Junior Hall. I do like it, and yet I do not like it; for which sentiments you can easily guess the reason. . . . To-day we begin the studies of the term; languages in the morning, Blair at noon, and algebra in the afternoon. . . . I shall try to write on Johnson. . . .

*April* 1. . . . Your letter made several faces shine, and when I came humbly plodding home Saturday, and carried a sum to the bank to be changed, I believe I held up my head six inches higher than before. Mother and aunt were afraid you had not left yourself enough to subsist upon. Have you? I told you I was waiter last quarter, and now I am this. You wonder why I was not appointed in the first quarter: it was because I did not petition, which was owing to ignorance when to go. I went a little while since to get my name out [leave of absence from Cambridge], and the President was very gracious, — told me I had grown, and said he hoped intellectually as well as physically, and told me (better than all), when my next bill comes out, to bring it to him, as I had never received the Saltonstall benefit promised me before I entered college. . . . My criticism (a theme) on "Guillaume le Conquérant" had two marks on the back, which distinction only six of the class obtained. Mathematics I hate. . . . As to Bowdoin [prize dissertation], I am very doubt-

ful about writing this year, for though reading Boswell I have not read half of Johnson's works. Do you not think I should do better to be a year writing the character of Socrates? . . .

*April* 23. . . . I went to the President to-day with my bills, and he gave me an order to the steward for credit for sixty-four dollars on Saltonstall legacy, and told me I should have more in June. The government have just made a new law that no student shall go to the theatre, on penalty of ten dollars fine at first offence, and other punishment afterwards. I am reading second volume of Boswell, third volume of Spenser's Faery Queen, with which I am *delighted* (a girl's word). . . .

He was also beneficiary under the Elder Penn bequest to the First Church "for payment of £10 yearly to such poor scholar or scholars as the elders and deacons shall see fit."

During the last term of the freshman year he was private tutor to President Kirkland's nephew (the late Reverend Dr.), Samuel Kirkland Lothrop, a lad two years younger than himself, who was getting ready to enter college. Dr. Lothrop told me that Emerson, though not a very urgent instructor, — only insisting on neat renderings of the classics, — was of great service to him in leading him to think more seriously and rightly about college life, and indeed about life in general. When

the lessons were done, he would converse at length — sometimes gravely, often with a dry humor, never bitterly — upon the Latin School, Boston society, what was worth while in college and what was not; also about books, out-of-the-way books, especially poetry. In manner and disposition he appeared then, in his fourteenth year, just what he was afterwards; kindly, affable, but self-contained; receiving praise or sympathy without taking much notice of it. His verses, for example, which he was willing to show, were his: whether good or bad, it mattered little. He seemed, said Dr. Lothrop, to dwell apart, as if in a tower, from which he looked upon everything from a loophole of his own.[1]

At the beginning of the next college year, President Kirkland told young Lothrop that the arrangement interfered too much with Emerson's studies, and sent him to another tutor.

The college studies did not, then or afterwards, receive from Emerson the undivided attention which the authorities wished and expected, and complaints came to Mr. Gould; who, Emerson says, "did not forget his scholars when they went to Cambridge. He came to see me in my room,

[1] "I abide in my old barrel, or, if you will, coop, or tub of observation, and mean to keep my eyes open, whether anything offers to be observed or not." — *Letter to M. M. E.*, January 27, 1858.

once or twice, to give me advice of my sins or deficiencies in mathematics, in which I was then, as I am now, a hopeless dunce." [1]

Harvard College was then and long afterwards, as far as the instruction went, very much a boys' school, such as boys' schools then were. The students were boys, and the business of the place was to give and receive a certain dose of learning, without much thought on either side of there being anything of intrinsic interest in it. The college exercises were very fitly called "recitations," and were for the most part confined to making sure that the lessons were duly repeated. Some exceptions there were: George Ticknor, the Professor of Modern Languages, and Edward Everett, the Greek Professor, had brought with them from Europe something of the methods of university instruction, which they (especially Mr. Ticknor) strove to introduce into the college system. Emerson diligently attended their lectures, of which he wrote out long notes, and he read to some extent in the directions they suggested. He also speaks with interest of Levi Frisbie, the Professor of Moral Philosophy; and the exercises in English composition under Edward Tyrrel Channing were labored over with affection. His earliest notebooks (from his junior year, the year of Mr.

[1] Remarks at the meeting of the Latin School Association in 1876. Reported in *Boston Evening Transcript*, November 9th.

Channing's appointment) are filled with rough drafts of college "themes," and he took two Bowdoin prizes for dissertations; one on the character of Socrates, and one on the Present State of Ethical Philosophy. He also received a Boylston prize for declamation, thirty dollars, which he carried home, hoping that it would buy a shawl or some other needed comfort for his mother, but was chagrined to learn that it had gone to pay the baker's bill. The rest of the course (except mathematics) he passed through without discredit though without distinction, and came out somewhat above the middle of his class in college rank.

No doubt the President and Mr. Gould, seeing his literary turn and his apparent docility, expected from him an assiduous application to learning; he seems to have expected this himself. But it may be doubted whether under any system he would have been a student of books. It was not in his nature; he could never, he said in after-years, deal with other people's facts; and he never made the attempt. His aunt Mary Emerson, who was anxiously following his course, said to him in one of her letters: "When the President saw your Socrates, he asked, Why not a better Locke, Stewart, and Paley scholar?" The truth was, the schoolboy docility had already given way to a remarkable maturity, which however showed itself as yet only in a feeling of self-reliance and contented.

ness to wait until his proper course should be made clear to him.

Upon the whole, he felt at the end of his college course that the college had done little for him. He found there but little nutriment suited to his appetite, and strayed off, though with some misgivings, to other pastures. In one of his journals long afterwards, he speaks of "the instinct which leads the youth who has no faculty for mathematics, and weeps over the impossible Analytical Geometry, to console his defeats with Chaucer and Montaigne, with Plutarch and Plato at night." "The boy at college apologizes for not learning the tutor's tasks, and tries to learn them; but stronger nature gives him Otway and Massinger to read, or betrays him into a stroll to Mount Auburn, in study hours. The poor boy, instead of thanking the gods and slighting the mathematical tutor, ducks before the functionary, and poisons his fine pleasures by a perpetual penance."

In his own way he was industrious; feeling vaguely that, for him, power of expression was more important than philological or scientific training. Besides rough drafts of college dissertations, I find in his note-books "phrases for use poetical:' many quotations, principally with a view to the form of expression; paraphrases of striking passages he had met with in his reading; also copies of letters from his aunt Mary, whose style he

greatly admired. At the end of one of these books he writes: "I think it has been an improving employment, decidedly. It has not encroached upon other occupations, and has afforded seasonable aid at various times to enlarge or enliven scanty themes, etc. Nor has it monopolized the energies of composition for literary exercises. Whilst I have written in it I have begun and completed my Pythologian poem of two hundred and sixty lines, and my dissertation on the character of Socrates. It has prevented the *ennui* of many an idle moment, and has perhaps enriched my stock of language for future exertions. Much of it has been written with a view to their preservation as hints for a peculiar pursuit at the distance of years."

The peculiar pursuit, it is needless to say, was preaching. But, besides moral reflections, his note-books contain the evidence of wide reading of a desultory kind, in which history, memoirs, and the English Reviews are prominent; and there is much criticism of the poetry of the day; laudatory of Byron and Moore, doubtful of "the experiments of Mr. Wordsworth and Mr. Coleridge;" queries whether they have not gained more ridicule than honor, not because they want genius, but because they want nature, and the affectation of simplicity is too apparent; praise of Barrow and of Ben Jonson for "their quaint, vigorous phrases."

Several of Emerson's classmates have given their

reminiscences of him at this time. In the *Boston Literary World* of May 22, 1880, Mr. W. B. Hill gives some interesting particulars, furnished him, he tells me, by his uncle, Mr. John Boynton Hill, Emerson's classmate: —

"In 1817, when good Dr. Kirkland was President, the 'President's freshman' was a slender, delicate youth, younger than most of his classmates, and of a sensitive, retiring nature. Although he had a brother [William] in the senior class, to introduce him to the ways of college life, he became acquainted with his companions slowly. The noisy ways of those jolly fellows who first hail new-comers were distasteful to him; and the proximity of his room to the President's study was equally distasteful to them. By degrees, however, the more studious members of his class began to seek him out. They found him to be unusually thoughtful and well-read; knowing perhaps less than they about text-books, but far more about literature. He had studied the early English dramatists and poets, pored over Montaigne, and knew Shakespeare almost by heart. In his sophomore year he became the leading spirit in a little book-club, of which Edward Kent, afterwards governor of Maine, Charles W. Upham, of Salem, and Dr. D. W. Gorham, of Exeter, N. H., were also members. The club purchased the English Reviews, the *North American* — then just struggling into life, — and,

in general, the literature of the day which they could not find in the college library. The member with the longest purse bought the book, and then, especially if it were one of Scott's novels, it was read aloud at a meeting of the club. In poetry, too, Emerson showed some skill, and was always ready to turn off squibs on college matters, or songs for festive occasions. He was chosen the poet for Class Day, and his poem was pronounced superior to the general expectation. His class numbered fifty-nine, and he stood high enough in it to have one of the twenty-nine Commencement parts. He was assigned 'John Knox' in a Conference on the Characters of John Knox, William Penn, and John Wesley. He was not elected into the Phi Beta Kappa (a post-graduate society, composed of the best scholars in each class) until some years after graduation. At the close of his freshman year Emerson was obliged, of course, to leave his room beneath the President's study, and accordingly removed to No. 5 Hollis Hall. In his junior year No. 15 Hollis was given to Emerson, in accordance with the college rule that the upper classes should have the best rooms. Here he roomed with John G. K. Gourdin, of South Carolina, a classmate of gentlemanly manners, quiet nature, and average scholarship. In his senior year he was in No. 9 Hollis, with his younger brother, Edward, who was then a member of the freshman class.

In his sophomore year his class had a fight with the freshmen at supper in Commons Hall, a fight described in the mock-heroic poem 'The Rebelliad.' Some of the sophomores were expelled for their share in the disturbance, and thereupon the whole class indignantly withdrew from college. Emerson remained at home until his class came to terms with the authorities. This trouble had the result of binding the class closely together, and creating a warm sympathy which after-years could not chill. On their return from banishment, Alden, the wag of the class, established the Conventicle Club, — a convivial club, of which Kingsbury was archbishop, Alden bishop, and John B. Hill parson. The club had no formal organization, but held its meetings at the pleasure of these self-appointed officers, and disbanded at the end of the senior year; it was composed of a set of intimate friends, and Emerson was one of the number. Although his quiet nature kept him out of most of the convivial societies, he was always genial, fond of hearing or telling a good story, and ready to do his share towards an evening's entertainment.

"Emerson was well liked both by classmates and teachers. Among his teachers was Edward Everett, who had just returned from Europe to fill the chair in Greek. For him Emerson had a most enthusiastic admiration, so great as to subject him

to the ridicule of his more prosy classmates.[1] His mind was unusually mature and independent. His letters and conversation already displayed something of originality. The occupation to which he looked immediately forward was teaching. His older brother [William] had a school in Boston, and, after graduation, Emerson began to teach with him; and, I may add, found the work by no means to his taste. The class of 1821 held for fifty years its annual reunion at Cambridge. As Emerson lived near, he was one of the most faithful attendants of these pleasant gatherings, and to him fell a large share of the task of looking after the unfortunate members, and soliciting aid for them from the more prosperous."

Mr. Hill, in kindly sending me copies of some early letters of Emerson, says: —

"Calling at his room upon some errand to the President, an acquaintance and friendship began which lasted through life. Here I first saw a copy of Shakespeare's works in full, and, under Emerson's tutelage, made acquaintance with Montaigne, Swift, Addison, Sterne, and exultantly fed in these pastures new; leaving behind Mosheim's Church History and Erskine's Sermons. His duties as Pres-

[1] This admiration had begun earlier, when Everett was preaching in Boston, and Emerson (as he told me) and his brother Edward used to go on Sunday and peep into the church where their favorite was expected to preach, to make sure that he was in the pulpit.

ident's freshman brought him considerable knowledge of almost every member of the college. When the exhibitions were pending, it was a matter of great interest to learn who were to have a share in the performances, and what the share was to be. The announcement was made in the morning, after prayers. The whole body of the undergraduates assembled on the porch in front of University Hall, and Emerson would be seen advancing up the walk from the President's study, bearing the cards on which were inscribed the names and the parts to be performed. It was an anxious moment; but Emerson, staid and impartial, bore to each the fateful message with a tranquil smile. He was mirthful, and, though never demonstrative or boisterous, keenly enjoyed scenes of merriment, and his placid smile was as highly prized as would have been a loud explosion in some others. I call to mind one occasion on which he took an active part. It was on a Fourth of July (1820): most of the class had gone home; a few of us were left, and Emerson stayed with us, — not caring, perhaps, to encounter the crowd and bustle of a public celebration. We were allowed the use of Commons Hall, and had with us for a part of the time the excellent Dr. Popkins, Professor of Greek, who gave us as a toast, μηδὲν ἄγαν [nothing too much], and withdrew, beaming. For this occasion Emerson wrote an appropriate song, to the tune of 'Scots wha hae,'

with which we made the walls of Commons Hall ring."

Another classmate, Mr. John Lowell Gardner, in a letter which Dr. Holmes has printed in his study of Emerson, gives some characteristic traits: "He had then the same manner and courtly hesitation in addressing you that you have known in him since. Emerson was not talkative; he never spoke for effect; his utterances were well weighed and very deliberately made; but there was a certain flash when he uttered anything that was more than usually worthy to be remembered."[1]

Mr. Josiah Quincy, also a classmate of Emerson, gives some account of him in college. Emerson seems to him "to have given no sign of the power that was fashioning itself for leadership in a new time. He was quiet, unobtrusive, and only a fair scholar, according to the standard of the college authorities."[2]

Mr. Samuel Bradford, Emerson's friend from childhood, was present at the Commencement exercises when the class graduated in 1821. Emerson, he tells me, expected permission to recite an original poem on that occasion, but having instead the part in the colloquy, was so disgusted that he would take no pains to commit it to memory, and had to be greatly prompted before he had finished.

[1] *Ralph Waldo Emerson.* By Oliver Wendell Holmes. Boston, 1885: p. 39. (In the series of American Men of Letters.)

[2] *Figures of the Past.* By Josiah Quincy. Boston, 1883: p. 77.

The original poem may be one of which I find some fragments in his note-book. He writes at the end: —

"This theme is dispensed with. All our old exercises are ceasing in succession to warn us of the approaching termination of the academic course. For myself, I wish it might not move so rapidly. I am in no haste to engage in the difficulties and tasks of the world, for whose danger and turmoil the independence is a small reward."

There was much in the retrospect that was unsatisfactory; still there had been leisure and opportunity for congenial employment. Besides the clubs mentioned by Mr. Hill, Emerson was member and secretary of a literary society, whose records I find among his papers. They begin with a preamble stating that, as "the great design of public education is to qualify men for usefulness in active life, and the principal arts by which we can be useful are those of writing and speaking, we agree to form ourselves into a society for writing and extemporaneous speaking, to be called ——." The name it was decided to leave blank, but it seems to have been the "Pythologian Club," for which Emerson wrote a poem of two hundred and sixty lines, under the title "Improvement." The meetings were kept up for two years, and the design appears to have been prosecuted with remarkable zeal; one half of the members handing in at each weekly meeting writ-

ten disquisitions upon topics assigned to them, and the other half discussing *viva voce* another set of questions, in the affirmative or negative according to previous arrangement. The writers of the evening were the judges of the speakers; the majority pronouncing the verdict. The subjects were extremely various and wide in scope: The existence of fossils upon mountains: Whether extension of territory be favorable to republican government? Whether poetry has been favorable to morality? Whether it be for the interest of a student to devote himself to obtaining college rank, or to spend his time industriously in some other way? Whether theatrical representations be advantageous to morality? This last question was decided in the negative, Kent and Emerson speaking on that side.[1] In addition to the regular weekly performances more elaborate essays and even original poems were read from time to time. After the literary exercises they partook of a frugal supper, the total expense being limited to two dollars.

In an obituary notice in 1869 of his classmate and club-mate, Cheney, Emerson professes to remember the Malaga from Warland's (the Cam-

[1] About the time when Emerson graduated I find in his note-books what appears to be the beginning of a series of letters to some newspaper, on the Drama; declaring his hostility to the existing stage, and enlarging upon the web of corruption spun by Massinger, Otway, Beaumont and Fletcher, etc., and even Shakespeare, but urging that in America, the land of experiments, so potent an influence might be used in the cause of virtue.

bridge grocer) as more delicious than any wine he had tasted since. Earlier than this, on occasion of some college reunion, he writes in his journal: "The whole mass of college nonsense came back in a flood; each resumed his old place. I too resumed my old place, and found myself, as of old, an amused spectator rather than a fellow. I drank a good deal of wine (for me), with the wish to raise my spirits to the pitch of good-fellowship; but wine produced on me its old effect, and I grew grave with every glass. Indignation and eloquence will excite me, but wine does not."

In the immediate retrospect the college nonsense took a brighter hue from contrast with the gloom of the period that succeeded it. When he left college, what he had before him was an indefinite extent of school-keeping, an occupation he had sufficiently tried in the winters of the college course, — usually, I suppose, at the school of his uncle, Reverend Samuel Ripley, at Waltham, where all the brothers were assistants in turn. In his freshman year he writes to his brother William: —

WALTHAM, *February* 7, 1818.

Well, my dear brother, here I am, safe and sound, as yet unmuzzled [1] and unsnowballed. Since I have been here I have learned to skate, rhymed,

[1] Being "muzzled" (I know not if the phrase survives in the present generation of school-boys) meant having one's face rubbed with snow.

written, and read, besides my staple commodity, school-keeping; and have earned me a new coat, which I wear to-morrow to Mr. Gore's to dinner, by invitation from King. . . . I did hope to have my *merces* in cash, — I envied you bringing your five-dollar bills to mother, — but Mr. R. said I needed a coat, and sent me to the tailor's, though I should rather have worn my old coat out first, and had the money; — mean-minded me! Just before I came from Boston, Mr. Frothingham sent mother a note containing twenty dollars, given him by "a common friend" for her, with a promise of continuing to her ten dollars quarterly for the use of her sons in college; not stipulating the time of continuance. At this time the assistance was peculiarly acceptable, as you know. It is in this manner, from the charity of others, mother never has been, and from our future exertions I hope never will be, in want. It appears to me the happiest earthly moment my most sanguine hopes can picture, if it should ever arrive, to have a home, comfortable and pleasant, to offer to mother; in some feeble degree to repay her for the cares and woes and inconveniences she has so often been subject to on our account alone. To be sure, after talking at this rate, I have done nothing myself; but then I 've less faculties and age than most poor collegians. But when I am out of college I will, *Deo volente*, study divinity and keep school at the

same time, — try to be a minister and have a house. I 'll promise no farther. . . .

School-keeping had not proved an attractive occupation for him. The last time that he tried it during his college course, "in my log-house on the mountains," — I know not where, — his disgust broke out in an unwonted violence of expression:

"*December* 15, 1820. I claim and clasp a moment's respite from this irksome school to saunter in the fields of my own wayward thought. But when I came out from the hot, steaming, stoved, stinking, dirty A B spelling-school, I almost soared and mounted the atmosphere at breathing the free, magnificent air, the breath of life. It was a delightful exhilaration, but it soon passed off."

His next experiment, after he graduated, was made under less repellent circumstances. His brother William had established in his mother's house in Boston a school for young ladies, which had now been two years in successful operation. Ralph joined him, and remained as assistant for two years, and then, his brother going to Europe to study divinity at Göttingen, a year longer in sole charge. In a little speech of friendly greeting, many years afterwards, to some of his former pupils who had invited him to meet them, — William being in New York, and not able to come, — he says: —

"My brother was early old; he entered college at thirteen, graduated at seventeen, and took charge of a public school at Kennebunk for a year. Then, at eighteen, offered himself, as a grave and experienced professor, who had seen much of life, and was ready to give the overflowing of his wisdom and ripe maturity to the youth of his native city. His mind was method; his constitution was order; and, though quiet and amiable, the tap of his pencil, you well remember, could easily enforce a silence and attention which the spasmodic activity of other teachers cannot often command. I confess to an utter want of this same virtue. I was nineteen; had grown up without sisters, and, in my solitary and secluded way of living, had no acquaintance with girls. I still recall my terrors at entering the school; my timidities at French, the infirmities of my cheek, and my occasional admiration of some of my pupils, — *absit invidia verbo*, — and the vexation of spirit when the will of the pupils was a little too strong for the will of the teacher. . . . I am afraid none but I remembers the merit of the 'compositions,' which I carefully read, and with the wish to fix their comparative rank. . . . Now I have two regrets in regard to the school. The first is that my teaching was partial and external. I was at the very time already writing every night, in my chamber, my first thoughts on morals and the beautiful laws of com-

pensation and of individual genius, which to observe and illustrate have given sweetness to many years of my life. I am afraid no hint of this ever came into the school, where we clung to the safe and cold details of languages, geography, arithmetic, and chemistry. Now I believe that each should serve the other by his or her strength, not by their weakness; and that, if I could have had one hour of deep thought at that time, I could have engaged you in thoughts that would have given reality and depth and joy to the school, and raised all the details to the highest pleasure and nobleness. Then, I should have shown you (as I did afterwards to later friends) the poems and works of imagination I delighted in; the single passages which have made some men immortal. The sharing a joy of this kind makes teaching a liberal and delicious art. What I wonder at is that I did not read to you, and attempt to teach you to read, certain selections of Shakespeare and the poets, in which in late years I have had a certain degree of success."

The recollections of one of his pupils are very far from confirming his opinion that he was unsuccessful as a teacher. She remembers him as entirely satisfactory to their parents, and much beloved and respected in the school; also that the reading of poetry was one of the regular exercises.

Emerson told Mr. Moncure Conway that, when he graduated, his ambition was to be a professor of rhetoric and elocution. I find in one of his later journals the query, "Why has never the poorest country college offered me a professorship of rhetoric? I think I could have taught an orator, though I am none."[1] But he could hardly have expected anything of the kind at this time. Some disappointment there was; but I can trace nothing definite, unless it were the failure to obtain an ushership at the Boston Latin School, which Dr. Ripley thought might have been given him had he been more studious in college.

He seems much better off as he was; yet the episode of school-keeping was the gloomiest, or rather it was the one gloomy passage in his life. In looking back, a year after he left college, he felt himself "a changed person in condition, in hope. I was then delighted with my recent honors; traversing my chamber, flushed and proud of a poet's fancies and the day when they were to be exhibited; pleased with ambitious prospects, and careless because ignorant of the future. But now I am a hopeless school-master, just entering upon years of trade, to which no distinct limit is placed; toiling through this miserable employment with-

[1] He said to Professor James B. Thayer, in 1873, that there was never a time in which he would not have accepted a professorship of rhetoric at Cambridge.

out even the poor satisfaction of discharging it well; for the good suspect me, and the geese dislike me. Hope, it is true, still hangs out, though at farther distance, her gay banners; but I have found her a cheat once, twice, many times, and shall I trust the deceiver again? . . . These are the suggestions only of a disappointed spirit, brooding over the fall of castles in the air. My fate is enviable, contrasted with that of others; I have only to blame myself, who had no right to build them."

What the air-castles were that faded before the sober gaze of nineteen I find nowhere stated. Probably they were as indefinite as the suspicion and dislike of which he speaks; and, like them, only the reflection of aspirations which as yet took no precise shape, and hardly even indicated, unless in a negative way, the direction in which they were to find satisfaction.

As he admits, his outward fortunes were prosperous enough. He was doing what he had expected to do, and what his father and his grandfather had done before him; the only difference was that in his case the circumstances were unusually favorable. Instead of the refractory material and the scanty pay that would naturally fall to the lot of a young school-master, his pupils were young women from the most cultivated class, and his income, all things considered, a handsome one. He says he earned in

his three years of school-keeping in Boston from two to three thousand dollars, while he could subsist, if he saw fit, on two hundred dollars a year. He was able to assist his mother and his brothers, and could urge William not to scant his European studies, and not to come home without seeing Rome. To his aunt Mary Emerson, indeed, his circumstances appeared "too easy and rhyme-like;" and she feared he might be tempted to pause on the threshold of the ministry and give himself up to a mere literary life, or, as she rather ambiguously expressed it, "never to exchange the lyre for the caduceus." Yet, though the present was tolerable enough, the future was full of perplexities. To his father and his grandfather, school-keeping had been merely the stepping-stone to an assured and honored position, the duties of which were well understood and marked out, and such as he, in their place, would have felt himself well able to perform. But now the whole basis of the ministry had begun to shift, — or, rather, the change that was involved in the Congregational system of worship was making itself more clearly manifest. In the Liberal churches, at least, it was felt more and more that it was the business of the minister, not merely to keep alive the sentiment of worship in the congregation, but, if need were, to create it, and that for this purpose special gifts were needed. It was the day of eloquent young preachers; Buckminster and Everett

were the models of the new generation, and Emerson had gone on thus far in full confidence that his path lay in the same direction. But now that the time was at hand when he must consider more nearly how his youthful dreams were to be realized, he was full of misgivings: —

"I cannot accurately estimate [he writes in his journal] my chances of success in my profession and in life. Were it just to judge the future from the past, they would be very low. In my case I think it is not. I have never expected success in my present employment. My scholars are carefully instructed; my money is faithfully earned; but the instructor is little wiser, and the duties were never congenial with my disposition. Thus far the dupe of hope, I have trudged on, with my bundle at my back and my eye fixed on the distant hill where my burden would fall. It may be I shall write, dupe, a long time to come, and the end of life shall intervene betwixt me and my release. My trust is that my profession shall be my regeneration of mind, manners, inward and outward estate, — or, rather, my starting-point; for I have hoped to put on eloquence as a robe, and by goodness and zeal and the awfulness of virtue to press and prevail over the false judgments, the rebel passions, and corrupt habits of men. We blame the past, we magnify and gild the future, and are not wiser for the multitude of days. Spin on, ye of the adamantine spindle, spin on my fragile thread."

That the mount of his deliverance seemed as far off as ever, he ascribed characteristically enough to a defect in himself, his "apathy," — a theme to which he often recurs: —

"It is a curious fact, and the abstrusest mystery that darkens our existence, how men should hold such a transcendent gift as thought in their hands, such a key to infinite pleasures, and show such painful reluctance to use it. In youth they often appreciate its unspeakable worth, and the imagination sometimes revels in the pictures of its wealth. They are impatient to begin the journey of greatness; to enter upon the exciting scene, glowing and towering in magnificence afar before their eyes. But ere the days of youth have gone over their heads an ungrateful and unaccountable indolence comes in to shut their eyes upon the glorious prospect; or, rather, to stop their pursuit, without removing its brilliant object."

"Once, when vanity was full fed, it sufficed to keep me at work, but alas! it has long been dying of a galloping consumption, and the Muse, I fear, will die too. The dreams of my childhood are all fading away and giving place to some very sober and very disgusting views of a quiet mediocrity of talents and condition; nor does it appear that any application of which I am capable, any efforts, any sacrifices, could at this moment restore any reasonableness to the familiar expectations of my earlier youth."

The truth was, the object, upon a closer approach, had lost its lustre. The greatness and the success of which he had dreamed were not such as could after all attract him. The boyish vision of the brilliant pulpit-orator, who was to draw men to himself and to religion by the splendor of his eloquence, seemed beyond his reach because at heart he had no desire to realize it. There was no leading in his nature towards a personal ascendency which might lend authority to sacred truth; the leading was the other way, towards the renouncement of all authority and all official sacredness; and this tendency, though it had not yet gathered strength to prevail, was strong enough to prevent his entering with an assured mind upon his intended career.

The discouraged tone of his journals (which she had asked to see) struck the anxious ear of aunt Mary Emerson in her retirement in the wilds of Maine, and did not altogether displease her; for what she dreaded most for him was a vulgar success.

"Is the Muse [she writes] become faint and mean? Ah, well she may, and better, far better she should leave you wholly, till you have prepared for her a celestial abode. Poetry, that soul of all that pleases; the philosophy of the world of sense; the Iris, the bearer of the resemblances of uncreated beauty, — yet, with these gifts, you flag!

Your Muse is mean because the breath of fashion has not puffed her. You are not inspired at heart because you are the nursling of surrounding circumstances. You become yourself a part of the events which make up ordinary life, — even that part of the economy of living which relates in the order of things necessarily to private and social affections rather than to public and disinterested. Still, there is an approaching period I dread worse than this sweet stagnation, — when your Muse shall be dragged into *éclat*. Then will your guardian angel tremble! In case of falling, of becoming deceived and vain, there will yet remain a hope that your fall may call down some uncommon effort of mercy, and you may rise from the love of deceitful good to that of real."

She counselled retirement and seclusion, and had much to say of the efficacy of a country life. He replies: —

BOSTON, *June* 10, 1822.

MY DEAR AUNT: . . . William and I have been making a pilgrimage on foot, this vacation (a fortnight), and went as far as Northborough, where we found a very pretty farm-house, and they easily consented to board us for a week. We passed our time in a manner exceedingly pleasant, and drank as deeply of those delights for which Vertumnus is celebrated as might be permitted to degraded, uninitiated cits. I cannot tell, but it seems to me

that Cambridge would be a better place to study than the woodlands. I thought I understood a little of that intoxication which you have spoken of, but its tendency was directly opposed to the slightest effort of mind or body; it was a soft, animal luxury, the combined result of the beauty which fed the eye, the exhilarating Paradise air which fanned and dilated the sense, the novel melody which warbled from the trees. Its first charm passed away very rapidly with a longer acquaintance, but not once during our stay was I in any fit mood to take my pen "and rattle out the battles of my thoughts," as Ben Jonson saith well. We dwelt near a pond which bore the name of Little Chauncey, and often crossed it in a boat, then tied our bark to a tree on the opposite shore, and plunged into the pathless woods, into forests silent since the birth of time, and lounged on the grass, with Bacon's Essays or Milton, for hours. Perhaps in the autumn, which I hold to be the finest season of the year, and in a larger abode, the mind might, as you term it, return upon itself; but for a year, without books, it would become intolerable. Do not think, however, that I rejoiced to get home. When our visions were interrupted by a sight of the State House, on the road, returning, I averted my face as did the Greek from the fane of the Furies.

I made a journal as we went, and have not read it over myself, but apprehend it hath too

many *jokes* to please you; it was written for a more terrestrial medium. I have to thank you for your letter and its literature, but you should have filled the sheet; you sent me two pages of blank paper, and I would have you remember that I have more at home than I can fill. I am a little surprised that a lady of your erudition should have forgotten that Johnson's poem is professedly an imitation of the tenth Satire of Juvenal. It proceeds upon the same plan as do many of Pope's Satires, which are nothing but an ingenious adaptation of an ancient poem to modern manners and a later philosophy. Perhaps it lessens your respect or idolatry of the poet, considered personally, but, independently of this, and as far as regards the mere sum of good reading, it is a laudable plan, for it submits the faults of one poet to the revision of another whom the distance of centuries makes an impartial critic. Thus the common reader is spared the difficulty of obtaining or the mortification of wanting the original; while the classical reader enjoys a double pleasure in the improved translation: first, that of the sentiments; next, the skill and wit displayed in the application of the old to the new; as of a compliment addressed to Mæcenas, two thousand years ago, newly applied with a lucky exactness to Bolingbroke or Dorset. I am curious to read your Hindoo mythologies. One is apt to lament over indolence and ignorance, when

he reads some of those sanguine students of the Eastern antiquities, who seem to think that all the books of knowledge and all the wisdom of Europe twice-told lie hid in the treasures of the Bramins and the volumes of Zoroaster. When I lie dreaming on the possible contents of pages as dark to me as the characters on the seal of Solomon, I console myself with calling it learning's El Dorado. Every man has a fairy-land just beyond the compass of his horizon: the natural philosopher yearned after his Stone; the moral philosopher for his Utopia; the merchant for some South Sea speculation; the mechanic for perpetual motion; the poet for — all unearthly things; and it is very natural that literature at large should look for some fanciful stores of mind which surpassed example and possibility.

I know not any more about your Hindoo convert [Rammohun Roy?] than I have seen in the *Christian Register* and am truly rejoiced that Unitarians have one trophy to build up on the plain where the zealous Trinitarians have builded a thousand. There are two rising stars in our horizon which we hope shall shed a benign influence from the sources of religion and genius. I mean Upham and [George] Bancroft. The second is expected to return from Europe in July, and may very probably succeed Greenwood. He is an indefatigable scholar and an accomplished orator.

. . . Dr. Warren tells Edward he had better voyage, and it is possible he may go to Germany, and thank his sickness for an European education; at least we have had some rambling conversation about such a project.

I must beg you to write to me, and see no reason why you should excuse yourself. If you cannot write now, I shall be prone to inquire where are those boasted virtues of hill and dale that you wot of. I have read lately much history, — am amazed at the insipidity of Mosheim. Italian history is very eventful; vastly more so than any other, I believe. There seems to be no slumber, no peace. All men's energies are awake, stirring the elements of society; and so rapid is the succession of political events that you are not acquainted with any line of policy long enough to become deeply interested, and the chronicles become as tiresome from their variety and flutter as others do from their monotony. . . .

Your affectionate nephew, WALDO.

She rejoins: —

VALE, *Friday*, 14, 1822.

DEAR WALDO: . . . So your journal is *jokey*. While the places which Virgil and Cicero trod are met with real or affected enthusiasm, the children of God tread on his footsteps with *ennui*. You should have gone separately. Other spirits than

Egerian haunt the solitudes of perfect retirement. . . .

Then you find no necessary sacredness in the country! Nor did Milton; but his mind and his spirits were their own place, and came when he called them, in the solitude of darkness. Solitude, which to people not talented to deviate from the beaten track is the safe ground of mediocrity (without offending), is to learning and genius the only sure labyrinth, though sometimes gloomy, to form the eagle-wing that will bear one farther than suns and stars. Byron and Wordsworth have there best and only intensely burnished their pens. Would to Providence your unfoldings might be there! — that it were not a wild and fruitless wish that you could be disunited from travelling with the souls of other men; of living and breathing, reading and writing, with one vital, time-fated idea, their opinions.

In the spring of 1823, her wish was partly gratified by Mrs. Emerson's removal with her household to Canterbury, a woodland district of the town of Roxbury, some four miles from Boston as it then was, but now within the city limits and included in the Franklin Park. Here they hired a farm-house on Canterbury Lane, — also called Dark Lane, or, in irony, Light Lane, from the gloom of the overshadowing woods; or sometimes

Featherbed Lane, from the rough pebbles of the road, — now Walnut Avenue. The place was then, what to some extent it still is, a picturesque region of rocks, hills, and woods, with very few habitations. The house, I am informed, was one lately removed by the Park Commissioners; it stood on what is now Williams Street (unless it has been already obliterated in the Park improvements), then a jut from the lane.

It was here, in April, 1824, that Emerson, "stretched beneath the pines" (which were cut down shortly afterwards), wrote his "Good-bye, proud world,"[1] in a tone that has led to the inference of some coldness if not exclusion from the coteries of Boston, such as Hawthorne, Mr. Lathrop tells us, found in Salem. But there is no other indication of any such thing, and the following passage in his journal, written at this time, and containing, no doubt, the germ of the poem, has the word "apocryphal" written after it: —

"There are harder crosses to bear than poverty, or sickness, or death. Are you armed with the supreme stoicism of a pure heart and a lowly mind? Can you hear, unconcerned, Pride's supercilious taunt and Derision's obstreperous laugh? Can you lift a serene face against the whisper that poisons your name with obloquy? Can you set unconquerable virtue against the seductions of the

[1] *Collected Writings*, ix. 37.

flesh? Can you give the care of the tongue to charity and caution? Can you resist the soft encroachments of sloth, and force your mind and your body to that activity which duty demands? These are the real difficulties which appall and press heavy upon a serious mind."

All the offending personages, I have no doubt, were as unreal as the sins at which he hints. Emerson had as little to suffer from his fellow-men as from the reproaches of his own conscience, and in either case was only indulging his imagination in a poetic vision.[1] Had he been a "Jacobin," that is, a Democrat, there might have been some question how he would be received in the Boston drawing-rooms, even so late as 1821. But he was a good Federalist, like his father, and he never, then or afterwards, would have met with exclusion from any society in Boston that he cared to enter.[2]

He enjoyed his pines and rocks with Edward, who graduated in 1824 and took a school in Roxbury, and Charles, who entered college this year, whenever they had a holiday; and for other society sought a regular correspondence with several of his classmates. Some of his letters to his classmate Withington have been published in the *Century*

[1] He omitted the verses from his *Selected Poems.* See, also, his letter to Dr. J. F. Clarke, in Dr. Holmes's *Emerson*, p. 29.

[2] A lady who remembered that time told me that there was no exclusiveness, but that she would "as soon have expected to see a cow in a drawing-room as a Jacobin."

(July, 1883, p. 454), and Mr. J. B. Hill has a large number, from which he kindly permits me to give the following extracts : —

TO JOHN B. HILL, GARRISON FOREST ACADEMY, BALTIMORE.

BOSTON, *March* 12, 1822.

MY DEAR CLASSMATE, — I am (I wish I was otherwise) keeping a school, and assisting my venerable brother to lift the truncheon against the fair-haired daughters of this raw city. It is but fair that those condemned to this delightful task should have free leave to waste their wits, if they will, in decrying and abominating the same. To judge from my own happy feelings, I am fain to think that since Commencement a hundred angry pens have been daily dashed into the sable flood to deplore and curse the destiny of those who teach. Poor, wretched, hungry, starving souls! How my heart bleeds for you! Better tug at the oar, dig the mine, or saw wood; better sow hemp or hang with it than sow the seeds of instruction. . . . Won't you sit down immediately and entertain your poor brother of the School Militant with some account of yourself and your region? Write sentiment, geography, statistics, Latin, anything, in short, in the wide world but mathematics. For I am truly ambitious of writing letters, and burn to say that I correspond with the reverend, the wise, the honor-

able members of the — Conventicle — if nothing else. What kind of people are the Southerners in your vicinity? You know our idea of an accomplished Southerner; to wit, as ignorant as a bear, as irascible and nettled as any porcupine, as polite as a troubadour, and a very John Randolph in character and address. . . . Perhaps you have seen "Europe," the most considerable American book that has been published, the most removed from our business-like habits, the most like Burke. Its author is Alexander Everett, the professor's brother at the Hague. You would mistrust the authenticity of a letter coming from me that had not this name in it. . . .

By way of trying my pen I am going to give you an insight into our city politics. The inhabitants divide themselves into three great classes: first, the aristocracy of wealth and talents; next, the great multitude of mechanics and merchants, and the good sort of people who are for the most part content to be governed without aspiring to have a share of power; and lastly, the lowest order of day-laborers and outcasts of every description, including school-masters. In this goodly assemblage, until the union of parties at the election of President Monroe, there was no division of factions, except the giant ones of Federalist and Democrat. But when these died away, the town became so tiresomely quiet, peaceful, prosperous, that it became necessary at

once, for decent variety, to introduce some new distinctions, some semblance of discord. A parcel of demagogues, ambitious I suppose of being known, or hoping for places as partisans which they would never attain as citizens, set themselves down to devise mischief. Hence it has followed that within a twelvemonth the words "aristocracy," "nabob," etc., have begun to be muttered. The very natural circumstance that the very best men should be uniformly chosen to represent them in the Legislature is begun to be called a formal conspiracy to deprive them of their rights, and to keep the power entirely in the hands of a few. Lately, this band of murmurers has become an organized party, calling themselves "the Middling Interest," and have made themselves conspicuous by two or three troublesome ebullitions of a bad spirit at the town-meetings. For the purpose of looking into their neighbors' concerns, they called a town-meeting, where they appeared in sufficient numbers to secure a majority, and then voted to distribute a kind of Doomsday-Book; to wit, a statement of every man's property and tax, from the assessors' books. This, you may easily conceive, in a money-getting town, where every one conceals his coppers, must be a very obnoxious measure. Another more important proceeding at the same meeting was the vote that the Selectmen be directed to instruct the Representatives to obtain from the Legislature leave to erect wooden build-

ings, which has long been against law. You know nobody ever goes to a town-meeting who is not personally interested; these votes, therefore, though easily passed, excited a general indignation when known, and a remonstrance was sent to the Legislature by the whole respectable portion of the town, and the bill was, in consequence, rejected. By dint of management, the other party have contrived to persuade the mechanics and most of the second class that it is their interest to have wooden buildings, and part of a plan to deny them, and that they are oppressed, etc.; and they have succeeded in obtaining twenty-six hundred subscribers to a second petition to the Legislature, which will be offered at the next session. In a new senatorial ticket they interfered, but did not succeed; and lastly they have been very pernicious to our interests in the election of Mayor.[1] (By the way, did you ever see a live Mayor?) Mr. [Harrison Gray] Otis was nominated, and is, you know, our first citizen: his was the only public nomination, and it was considered certain that he would succeed; but the Middling Interest fixed upon [Josiah] Quincy, and on the day of election no choice was made, and both candidates withdrew their names. By this ingenious device the parties were reduced to take the third best, and acquiesce in the appointment of our present sublime Mayor [John Phillips],

[1] Boston became a city in this year.

with the mortifying reflection that Boston has many a worthier son than he. Such is our party history, and among our staid countrymen we shall hardly have a Guelf and Ghibelline controversy, though this be an ill-managed, poor-spirited party, and promises little good to our civil welfare. . . .

I think, Mr. Hill, we rather improve in the book line. Washington Irving is just about to publish a book called "Bracebridge Hall." . . . *N. A. Review* grows better and travels farther, and though we are inundated with silly poetry, we improve. . . . Here too I may add a testimony of our liberal spirit, that the town voted twenty-five hundred dollars to George B. Emerson to procure philosophical apparatus for the Classical School. He has just received part of his instruments, which are the most beautiful in the country. [George] Bancroft is expected to return from Europe in July, and it is supposed that he will be the successor of Mr. Greenwood at the New South Church. . . . Recollect that I have altered my name from Ralph to Waldo, so be sure and drop the first. It is quite a marrying time among our ministers; if it were not for postage I would send you a piece of Everett's wedding-cake.

*July* 3, 1822. . . . You may see from my date that we are upon the eve of our great national anniversary. Does it produce much excitement in your quarter? I wish it may never rise in storms, but I find myself a little prone to croaking of late,

— partly because my books warn me of the instability of human greatness, and I hold that government never subsisted in such perfection as here. Except in the newspapers and the titles of office, no being could be more remote, no sound so strange. Indeed, the only time when government can be said to make itself seen and felt is our festivals, when it bears the form of a kind of general committee for popular amusements. In this merry time, and with real substantial happiness above any known nation, I think we Yankees have marched on since the Revolution to strength, to honor, and at last to *ennui*. It is most true that the people (of the city, at least) are actually tired of hearing Aristides called the Just, and it demonstrates a sad caprice when they hesitate about putting on their vote such names as Daniel Webster and Sullivan and Prescott, and only distinguish them by a small majority over bad and doubtful men. . . . Will it not be dreadful to discover that this experiment, made by America to ascertain if men can govern themselves, does not succeed; that too much knowledge and too much liberty make them mad? . . . We will seek to believe that its decay will be splendid with literature and the arts, to the latest time, — splendid as the late day of Athens and of Rome; and a century hence, if the orator lives too late to boast of liberty, he may brag of past renown and present Muses. . . . We citi-

zens venture to deny the "Pirate" a little of the reverence we have accorded to his predecessors, and are divided upon the subject of the "Spy;" many preferring it to the last book, which opinion I personally spurn. . . . Our economical citizens have been quite dead to "Bracebridge Hall," since its price was known. I have neither read it nor seen a single individual who has read it. The extracts which I have met with have disappointed me much, as he has left his fine "Sketch-Book" style for the deplorable Dutch wit of "Knickerbocker," which to me is very tedious. . . .

BOSTON, *November* 12, 1822.

. . . By dint of much electioneering the good cause has succeeded, and we are sending our Giant down among you false Southrons. We are proudly anticipating the triumph of a Northern interest to be begun or to be achieved by Mr. Webster. I think I recorded in a former letter the rise of the Middling Interest: this party only unites the old Democratic party under a new name, for this last regularly hold a mock caucus, and agree to support the candidate whom the Middling Interest have nominated. I think Webster had about two thirds of the whole number of votes. . . . Think you that our Scottish Enchanter is not one, but many? "Peveril of the Peak," long since announced, has halted on his journey. As to the "Fortunes," I

think it rather shows hurry than exhausted strength. There is a great deal of merit in supporting the interest of the book so long by nothing but conversation, and I think that everybody who has been at college recognizes Lord Dalgarno. One good book I advise you to read, if you have not, with all convenient celerity, — Stewart's last Dissertation, one of the most useful octavos extant. It saves you the toil of turning over a hundred tomes in which the philosophy of the mind since the revival of letters is locked up. There is a class of beings which I very often wish existed on earth, — Immortal Professors, — who should read all that is written, and at the end of each century should publicly burn all the superfluous pages in the world. Now, such a book as Stewart's answers this purpose admirably, under the head Philosophy. If our Immortal Professors were appointed to-day, we should rapidly find that the literary world was but a Don Quixote's library.

*January* 3, 1823. . . . My sole answer and apology to those who inquire about my studies is, — I keep school. I study neither law, medicine, nor divinity, and write neither poetry nor prose. . . . I am happy to contradict the rumors about Bancroft. I heard him preach at New South a few Sabbaths since, and was much delighted with his eloquence. So were all. He needs a great deal of cutting and pruning, but we think him an infant

Hercules. All who know him agree in this, that he has improved his time thoroughly in Göttingen. He has become a perfect Greek scholar, and knows well all that he pretends to know; as to divinity, he has never studied it, but was approbated abroad. Our theological sky blackens a little, or else the eyes of our old men are growing dim. But certain it is that with the flood of knowledge and genius poured out upon our pulpits, the light of Christianity seems to be somewhat lost. The young imagine they have rescued and purified the Christian creed; the old, that the boundless liberality of the day has swept away the essence with the corruptions of the Gospel, and has arrived at too sceptical refinements. An exemplary Christian of to-day, and even a minister, is content to be just such a man as was a good Roman in the days of Cicero, or of the imperial Antonines. Contentment with the moderate standard of pagan virtue implies that there was no very urgent necessity for Heaven's last revelation; for the laws of morality were written distinctly enough before, and philosophy had pretty lively dreams of the immortality of the soul. . . . Presbyterianism and Calvinism, at the South at least, make Christianity a more real and tangible system, and give it some novelties which were worth unfolding to the ignorance of men. And this, I think, is the most which can be said of Orthodoxy. When I have been at Cambridge and

studied divinity, I will tell you whether I can make out for myself any better system than Luther or Calvin, or the liberal besoms of modern days. I am tired and disgusted with preaching which I have been accustomed to hear. I know that there are in my vicinity clergymen who are not merely literary or philosophical. . . . I have been attending Professor Everett's lectures, which he has begun to deliver in this city, upon Antiquities. I am as much enamored as ever with the incomparable manner of my old idol, though much of his matter is easily acquired from common books. We think strong sense to be his distinguishing feature; he never commits himself, never makes a mistake. . . . Barnwell, I am told, is about finishing, or has actually finished, his studies. If you know anything about him, or poor Motte, or Robert Gourdin, communicate, communicate. You have other correspondents here, or I would subjoin a list of the acts and lives of your classmates in my vicinity. I fervently hope — unsocial being as I am — that the warm fraternal feelings which burn so brightly at the first separation of a class are not wholly quenched as we grow older.

*February* 27, 1823. Come out thence and pluck out thy lot of life from the abundance of the North. Everything will pass in this land of notions. Courage and confidence will match the world; will take human affections and gold by

storm. The complaint is old as the world that merit is neglected. The humble, the bashful, the poor, the whole uncounted host of all the unlucky, take up this cry and repeat it until they believe it. For my part, I was always one of the loudest; holding it to be a sound and profound remark. . . . The "Pioneers" I like very much. I hope they have found their way to the Garrison. The last *N. A. Review* is full of wit and literature, of which the Idol wrote six articles. . . .

LIGHT LANE, LOWER CANTERBURY,
ROXBURY, MASSACHUSETTS, *June* 19, 1823.

. . . I commend to your especial notice the date of this epistle, which will show you that I am living in the country. Here my only ejaculation is, *O fortunati nimium*, as of yore, and I teach, ay, teach in town, and then scamper out as fast as our cosset horse will bring us, to snuff the winds and cross the wild blossoms and branches of the green fields. I am seeking to put myself on a footing of old acquaintance with Nature, as a poet should; but the fair divinity is somewhat shy of my advances, and I confess I cannot find myself quite as perfectly at home on the rock and in the wood as my ancient, and I might say infant, aspirations led me to expect. My aunt (of whom I think you have heard before, and who is alone among women) has spent a great part of her life in the country, is

an idolater of nature, and counts but a small number who merit the privilege of dwelling among the mountains, — the coarse, thrifty cit profanes the grove by his presence, — and she was anxious that her nephew might hold high and reverential notions regarding it, as the temple where God and the mind are to be studied and adored, and where the fiery soul can begin a premature communication with the other world. When I took my book, therefore, to the woods, I found nature not half poetical, not half visionary, enough. There was nothing which the most froward imagination would construe for a moment into a satyr or dryad. No Greek or Roman or even English fantasy could deceive me one instant into the belief of more than met the eye. In short, I found that I had only transplanted into the new place my entire personal identity, and was grievously disappointed. Since I was cured of my air-castles I have fared somewhat better; and a pair of moonlight evenings have screwed up my esteem several pegs higher, by supplying my brain with several bright fragments of thought, and making me dream that mind as well as body respired more freely here. And there is an excellence in nature which familiarity never blunts the sense of, — a serene superiority to man and his art, in the thought of which man dwindles to pigmy proportions. . . . In writing, as in all things else, I follow my caprice, and my pen

has played me many tricks lately in taking a holiday somewhat longer than his wont, and sore against my will; for if my scribbling humor fails to come upon me, I am as uneasy as a cow unmilked, — pardon the rusticity of the image, — and in the end must yield my brain's yeasty burden, or die. . . . Bancroft and Cogswell have issued their prospectus; they have obtained a house at Northampton, and propose to begin, with fifteen scholars only, in October. Board and tuition three hundred dollars per annum. I mourn, because good school-masters are plenty as whortleberries, but good ministers assuredly are not, and Bancroft might be one of the best. . . . I am going to tell you where I live. The Dedham turnpike, which is only a continuation of the Main Street in Boston, leads you, after about two miles, to a lane, the first left-hand turning upon the turnpike. Go to the head of said lane and turn to the right, and you will straightway be in the neighborhood of Mr. Stedman Williams, a farmer of thirty years' standing, in whose vicinity we live, and whose tenants we are. Ask him.

They remained in Canterbury a year and a half, until February, 1825, when Mrs. Emerson removed to Boston, and Waldo to Cambridge, where his mother joined him in April of the following year. Charles was in college there. Waldo was entering

the Divinity School. Bulkeley, a pleasant, conscientious boy, between Edward and Charles in age, had left them. He had never grown up in mind beyond his childhood, and now, beginning to be restless at home, it was thought best to place him under careful guardianship, at a distance.

## CHAPTER III.

### PREPARATION FOR THE MINISTRY. — TRIP TO THE SOUTH. — RETURN HOME.

1824-1829.

Before leaving Canterbury, Emerson, in the following passage in his journal, took stock of his prospects: —

"*Sunday, April* 24, 1824. I am beginning my professional studies. In a month I shall be legally a man; and I deliberately dedicate my time, my talents, and my hopes to the church. Man is an animal that looks before and after, and I should be loath to reflect, at a remote period, that I took so solemn a step in my existence without some careful examination of my past and present life. I cannot dissemble that my abilities are below my ambition; and I find that I judged by a false criterion when I measured my powers by my ability to understand and to criticise the intellectual character of another. I have, or had, a strong imagination, and consequently a keen relish for the beauties of poetry. My reasoning faculty is proportionably weak; nor can I ever hope to write a Butler's 'Analogy' or an 'Essay' of Hume. Nor

is it strange that with this confession I should choose theology; for the highest species of reasoning upon divine subjects is rather the fruit of a sort of moral imagination than of the reasoning machines, such as Locke, and Clarke, and David Hume. Dr. Channing's Dudleian Lecture is the model of what I mean . . . [for law and medicine he feels himself unfit], but in divinity I hope to thrive. I inherit from my sire a formality of manners and speech, but I derive from him or his patriotic parent a passionate love for the strains of eloquence. I burn after the *aliquid immensum infinitumque* which Cicero desired. What we ardently love we learn to imitate. But the most prodigious genius, a seraph's eloquence, will shamefully defeat its own end if it has not first won the heart of the defender to the cause he defends."

The eloquence he so ardently desired could not, he had begun to feel, be put on as a robe, — it could only be the natural outcome of entire conviction; and he set himself to examine the dogmas he was to teach, in order to make sure, not merely that there was nothing in them which he was concerned to deny, but that they were the genuine, unforced expression of his own beliefs.

Speculative difficulties never much troubled Emerson at any time. When they came in his way he quietly shelved them, and went on registering the

facts that appeared to make for the one side or the other, without feeling it necessary to strike a balance and make up the final account. But at this time, when he was making ready to teach others, he felt it incumbent on him to prepare himself to give the reasons for his faith.

During the Canterbury residence he had turned for aid, he tells Mr. Hill, to one or two clergymen in his vicinity, "who are not merely literary or philosophical;" especially to Dr. Channing, under whose direction he wished to place himself. Dr. Channing received him kindly, gave him a list of books to read, and was ready to talk with him from time to time, but would not undertake the direction of his studies; indeed, seemed to be hardly capable, Emerson said, of taking another person's point of view, or of communicating himself freely in private conversation. Neither of them was particularly gifted in this respect, and they never really came together. Emerson greatly admired Channing's sermons, above all the famous Dudleian Lecture; but he says of him: "He can never be reported, for his eye and his voice cannot be printed, and his discourses lose what was best in wanting them."

He turned also to his aunt Mary Emerson, to see what aid could be had from her sibylline inspirations: —

ROXBURY, *October* 16, 1823.

MY DEAR AUNT: . . . I have a catalogue of curious questions, that have been long accumulating, to ask you. . . . I ramble among doubts, to which my reason offers no solution. Books are old and dull and unsatisfactory; the pen of a living witness and faithful lover of these mysteries of Providence is worth all the volumes of all the centuries. Now what is the good end answered in making these mysteries to puzzle all analysis? What is the ordinary effect of an unexplicable enigma? Is it not to create opposition, ridicule, and bigoted scepticism? Does the universe, great and glorious in its operation, aim at the sleight of a mountebank who produces a wonder among the ignorant by concealing the causes of unexpected effects? All my questions are usually started in the infancy of inquiry, but are also, I fear, the longest stumbling-blocks in philosophy's way. So please tell me what reply your active meditations have forged in metaphysical armory to — what is the origin of evil? And what becomes of the poor slave, born in chains, living in stripes and toil, who has never heard of virtue and never practised it, and dies cursing God and man? Must he die in eternal darkness, because it has been his lot to live in the shadow of death? A majority of the living generation, and of every past generation

known in history, are worldly and impure; or, at best, do not come up to the strictness of the rule enjoined upon human virtue. These, then, cannot expect to find favor in the spiritual region whither they travel. How is it, then, that a Benevolent Spirit persists in introducing on to the stage of existence millions of new beings in incessant series to pursue the same wrong road and consummate the same tremendous fate? And yet, if you waver towards the clement side here, you incur a perilous responsibility of preaching smooth things. And, as to the old knot of human liberty, our Alexanders must still *cut* its Gordian twines. Next comes the Scotch Goliath, David Hume; but where is the accomplished stripling who can cut off his most metaphysical head? Who is he that can stand up before him, and prove the existence of the universe and its Founder? He hath an adroiter wit than all his forefathers in philosophy if he will confound this uncircumcised. The long and dull procession of reasoners that have followed since have challenged the awful shade to duel, and struck the air with their puissant arguments. But as each newcomer blazons "Mr. Hume's objections" on his pages, it is plain they are not satisfied the victory is gained. Now, though every one is daily referred to his own feelings as a triumphant confutation of the glozed lies of this deceiver, yet it would assuredly make us feel safer to have our victorious

answer set down in impregnable propositions. You have not thought precisely as others think; and you have heretofore celebrated the benevolence of De Staël, who thought for her son. Some revelation of nature you may not be loath to impart, and a hint which solves one of my problems would satisfy me more with my human lot.

Dr. Channing is preaching sublime sermons every Sunday morning in Federal Street, one of which I heard last Sunday, and which surpassed Everett's eloquence. It was a full view of the subject of the light of Providence compared with Nature, and to show the insufficiency of the latter alone. Revelation was as much a part of the order of things as any other event in the universe.

Your affectionate and obliged nephew,

R. WALDO E.

And this, without date, but about the same time: —

"I am blind, I fear, to the truth of a theology which I can't but respect for the eloquence it begets, and for the heroic life of its modern, and the heroic death of its ancient, defenders. I acknowledge it tempts the imagination with a high epic (and better than epic) magnificence, but it sounds like nonsense in the ear of understanding. The finite and flitting kingdoms of this world may forget, in the course of ages, their maxims of govern-

ment, and annul to-day the edict of a thousand years. But that the administration of eternity is fickle, that the God of revelation hath seen cause to repent and botch up the ordinances of the God of Nature, I hold it not irreverent but impious in us to assume. Yet Paley's deity and Calvin's deity are plainly two beings; both sublime existences, but one a friend and the other a foe to that capacity of order and right, to that understanding, which is made in us arbiter of things seen, the prophet of things unseen. When I see the just and good of all ages consenting to a single creed that taught the infinite perfection and paternal character of God and the accountableness of man, I cannot help acknowledging the just and invariable fruit of those means of information that are put in all hands. I cannot help revolting from the double deity, gross, Gothic offspring of some German school. I suppose you will think me so dazzled by a flambeau that I cannot see the sun, when I say that the liberality of the age, though it stray into license and deism" . . .

The conclusion is wanting, but the drift may be guessed from the following scrap "from Waterford" copied in his journal: —

"He talks of the Holy Ghost: God of mercy, what a subject! Holy Ghost given to every man in Eden; it was lost in the great contest going on in the vast universe, — it was lost, stifled; it was re-

given embodied in the assumed humanity of the Son of God. And since, — the reward of prayer, agony, self-immolation! Dost not like the faith and the means? Take thy own, or rather the dictates of fashion. . . . Would to God thou wert more ambitious, — respected thyself more and the world less. Thou wouldst not to Cambridge. True, they use the name *Christo*, but that venerable institution, it is thought, has become but a feeble, ornamental arch in the great temple which the Christian world maintains to the honor of his name. It is but a garnished sepulchre, where may be found some relics of the body of Jesus, — some grosser parts which he took not at his ascent, and which will be forgotten and buried forever beneath the flowerets of genius and learning, if the master-spirits of such as Appleton, Chalmers, and Stewart, and the consecrated Channing do not rescue it by a crusade of faith and lofty devotion. The nature and limits of human virtue, its dangers, its origin, 'questions answered at Cambridge, easily,' — God, forgive thy child his levity, — subjects veiled in something of thine own awful incomprehensibility, soothed only by the faith which reason leaves, but can never describe. . . . Then you do not go to Stewart at Andover? You might like him, though he makes mouths at the heartless [ ] of kindnesses which tickle, not benefit, the weak world. Why did you not study under the wing of

Channing, which was never pruned at Cambridge? If he advised Cambridge, he is not able or good enow to set out alone, though he avows dissent in some points. Alas that you are there! The public ear, weary of the artifices of eloquence, will ask for the wants of the soul to be satisfied. May you be among others who will prove a Pharos to your country and times. But I wander from the design of writing. It is to say that the years of levity and pride, etc. [which render me, Emerson inserts, unworthy to speak of the heights of religion], I cannot but think were owing to the atmosphere of theology, to my own speculations, to what is worse and certain, the sin of human nature. Could years of penitence restore me the last twenty years! It was pretty, it seemed best, to tell children how good they were! The time of illusion and childhood is past, and you will find mysteries in man which baffle genius."

Here is a scrap apparently from one of his letters: —

"All I said was this, — that, *a priori*, we know no reason why God may not exist in a threefold unity; but that since the manner of such an existence is inconceivable to our minds, he would never have revealed to us such an existence which we can neither describe nor comprehend. Infinite wisdom established the foundations of knowledge in the human mind so that twice two could never make any-

thing else than four. So soon as this can be otherwise, our faith is loosened and science abolished. Three may be one, and one three."

To his brother William, who was studying theology at Göttingen, he writes: —

"*September* 12, 1824. Why talk you not of my studies, — how and what I should do? I shall be glad of any useful hints from the paradise of dictionaries and critics. How much study is practicable in a day? Are the fables of literary romance about thirteen, fourteen, fifteen hours, turned into sober earnest?"

To William's suggestion that he should come to Göttingen, he replies: —

"If you think it every way advisable, indisputably, absolutely important, that I should do as you have done and go to Göttingen, — and you can easily decide, — why, say it distinctly, and I will make the sacrifice of time and take the risk of expense immediately. So of studying German. . . . Say particularly if German and Hebrew be worth reading; for, though I hate to study them, cordially, I yet will, the moment I can count my gains. Had I not better put on my hat and take ship for the Elbe?"

But on reflection he felt it to be impracticable:

"As to the voyage you mention for me, alas! I shall come to fairy-land as soon. Unless I could take the wings of the morning for a packet, and

feed on wishes instead of dollars, and be clothed with imagination for raiment, I must not expect to go. I shall be glad to try the new scene, but it might not do me any good."

To the same: —

ROXBURY, *January* 18, 1825.

I have cast my bread on the waters, locked up my school, and affect the scholar at home. The truth is, we think we have got to the Candlemas-day of our winter, and that we may be bold to borrow the second half of our wood and hay; assuming that the spring and summer of lucrative exertion is nigh. . . . Ambitious hopes have been engendered by the real or supposed increase of value of the old property on Main Street. A great hotel has been builded thereon, whose cost it is hoped the Carver Street land will pay, and thereafter two hundred dollars per annum should come to every thirteenth, with a reasonable prospect of more. Moreover, if I go to Cambridge at the end of the present vacation, as I shall, the learned and reverend have consented to admit me to the middle class.

(Journal: February 8, 1825.) "The last evening I spend in Canterbury. I go to my college chamber to-morrow, a little changed for better or worse since I left it in 1821. I have learned a few more names and dates; additional facility of

expression; the gauge of my own ignorance, its sounding-places and bottomless depths. I have inverted my inquiries two or three times upon myself, and have learned what a sinner and what a saint I am. My cardinal vice of intellectual dissipation — sinful strolling from book to book, from care to idleness — is my cardinal vice still; is a malady that belongs to the chapter of incurables. I have written two or three hundred pages that will be of use to me. I have earned two or three thousand dollars, which have paid my debts and obligated my neighbors; so that I thank Heaven I can say, none of my house is the worse for me."

He took a room in Divinity Hall (No. 14, on the lower floor, the northeastern corner): not a very desirable lodging in that somewhat damp locality, but cheap. A month afterwards he found himself obliged, by ill-health, and particularly by an affection of the eyes, to suspend his studies and leave Cambridge. In a scrap of autobiography he says: —

"Being out of health, and my eyes refusing to read, I went to Newton, to my uncle Ladd's farm, to try the experiment of hard work for the benefit of health. There were a couple of laborers in the field, and I worked as well as I could with them. One of these men was a Methodist, and, though ignorant and rude, had some deep thoughts. He said to me that men were always praying, and that

all prayers were granted. I meditated much on this saying, and wrote my first sermon therefrom; of which the divisions were: (1) Men are always praying; (2) All their prayers are granted; (3) We must beware, then, what we ask. This sermon I preached at Waltham, in Mr. Samuel Ripley's pulpit, October 15, 1826."

In the course of the summer his health so far improved as to allow him to take one or two pupils, who lived with him, and in September to take charge of a public school at Chelmsford for a few months. In January, 1826, having the "joy to read and write again," he left Chelmsford, and took his brother Edward's school at Roxbury,— Edward in his turn being compelled by persistent ill-health to give up his law-studies and seek relief in a voyage to the Mediterranean. His mother, meantime, had moved to Cambridge and taken part of the "Mellen House," still standing, I believe, on North Avenue, near Jarvis Field. He rejoined her here in April.

TO MISS MARY EMERSON.

CAMBRIDGE, *April* 6, 1826.

MY DEAR AUNT,—Epicurus said to his fellow-men, 'We are a sufficient spectacle to each other;' and he said truly, for it is the business and pleasure of life to make the best acquaintance we can with the individuals of the enormous crowd of

the living and the dead. They so press on each other in the innumerable procession that 't is but little we can learn distinctly of each. . . . But although we are by the distance necessarily made strangers to infinite numbers, the same distance helps us to group them together and to trace the general direction and many windings of the march. And who are the guides and where the encampments, whither the progress and when the period, of this tragic journey of humanity through the champaign of the world? . . . Let us draw nearer and make the most of our vantage to satisfy our curiosity respecting the intents and condition of those we are favorably situated to observe. They are banded into companies at the outset of their array for better defence against the wolf and the lion, against famine and storm. They are organized under governments for the convenience and protection of the individuals. But who leads the leaders and instructs the instructor? I behold along the line men of reverend pretension, who have waited on mountains or slept in caverns to receive from unseen intelligence a chart of the unexplored country, a register of what is to come. But, woe is me! as they proceeded, the gods of the nations became no gods; the facts belied the prophecies, and the advancing journey betrayed the falsehood of their guides. Goodness was not found with the servants of the Supremely Good, nor wisdom with those who had

seen the All-Wise. But still on they went, the stately procession, by tribes and kindreds and nations, substituting experience of the past for knowledge of the future, advancing with courageous heart into the unexplored wilderness, though with many delays and many retrograde wanderings, whilst many a day of beauty lighted their march, and many a halcyon sign of hope and knowledge illuminated the future. At the last an obscure man in an obscure crowd brought forward a new scripture of promise and instruction. But the rich and the great leaned to their ancient holdings, and the wise distrusted this teacher, for they had been often misled before. But the banner inscribed with his Cross has been erected, and it has been to some a cloud and to some a pillar of fire. We too have taken our places in the immeasurable train, and must choose our standard and our guide. Is there no venerable tradition whose genuineness and authority we can establish; or must we, too, hurry onward inglorious in ignorance and misery, we know not whence, we know not whither? Perhaps you are tired of my metaphor, but I write to get answers, not to please myself, and cannot tell how much I was disappointed to find my long-expected letter nothing but an envelope. My eyes are well, comparatively; my limbs are diseased with rheumatism. Edward writes that he mends daily. Your affectionate nephew,

R. WALDO E.

Why so anxious about Charles? He stands, we suppose, first in his class; he loves letters, he loves goodness. But goodness is an abstraction, and we cannot always be good-humored, even though we love to madness. He will be eloquent, and will write, but comes not up to the force and nobleness of the transatlantic boy, — certainly not to my cherished image of the same.

Soon afterwards they shifted their quarters to "Dr. [Levi] Hedge's house on the Old Common," now Winthrop Square, where he could have a school-room. He opened a school here which he kept through the summer, and then brought his school-keeping to a close.

His pupils' recollections of him as a school-master dwell chiefly upon his moral influence; his benign, encouraging demeanor, his horror at any coarseness, and his interest in their lives outside of the school-room. He gave them a holiday on the occasion of Webster's address at Bunker's Hill, and was much disappointed at finding the next day that none of them went to hear it. Richard Henry Dana, Jr., was one of his scholars. Afterwards, when "Two Years before the Mast" appeared, Emerson wrote to his brother William: "Have you seen young Dana's book? Good as 'Robinson Crusoe,' and all true. He was my scholar once, but he never learned this of me, more 's the pity."

The weary days of school-keeping were over, but he was not able to turn at once to his own pursuits; he was afflicted with rheumatism, and there were symptoms of lung-disease. His professional studies, it is obvious, with all these interruptions, could not have been very serious. He had been allowed, during the ten or twelve months he spent at Cambridge, to attend the lectures of the class he had expected to join, though without undertaking the regular work, and he looked forward in a general way to entering the ministry at the same time with them, though he felt himself at present in no condition for undertaking the active exercise of it.

CAMBRIDGE, *August* 1, 1826.

MY DEAR AUNT, — Neither my silence nor my volubility succeeds in extracting the old-fashioned long letters I am writing after. 'T is said the weaker party is ever the recommender of moderation;[1] in like manner the poor in spirit will be strenuous to enforce the duty of imparting out of their affluence on their patrons. None feels his poverty so sordidly as he who contemplates prodigious expenses, and I am already turning my little pennyworth to account in the preparation of sermons. In the fall I propose to be *approbated*, to have the privilege, though not at present the purpose, of preaching, but at intervals. I do not now

[1] Hume.

find in me any objections to this step. 'T is a queer life, and the only humor proper to it seems quiet astonishment. Others laugh, weep, sell, or proselyte; I admire. There are, I take it, in each man's history, insignificant passages which he feels to be to him not insignificant; little coincidences in little things, which touch all the springs of wonder and startle the sleeper conscience in the deepest cell; the mind standing forth in alarm with all her faculties, suspicious of a Presence which it behoves her deeply to respect, — touched not more with awe than with curiosity, if perhaps some secret revelation is not about to be vouchsafed, or doubtful if some moral epoch is not just now fulfilled in its history, and the tocsin just now struck that severs and tolls out an irreparable past. These are not the state reasons by which we can enforce the burdensome doctrine of a Deity on the world, but make often, I apprehend, the body of evidence on which private conviction is built. . . . Human nature will go daft in our times, like the Grecian father who embraced two Olympian victors in one day. To-morrow, Everett is to open his lips on this signal topic,[1] and Webster the next day. . . . In the wind of these great events I am to assume my office, the meek ambassador of the Highest. Can you not suggest the secret oracles which such a commission needs, the lofty truths that are keys and indexes to

[1] The deaths of John Adams and of Jefferson on the fourth of July of this year.

all other truth and to all action on society? Can you not awaken a sympathetic activity in torpid faculties? Whatever Heaven has given me or withheld, my feelings or the expression of them is very cold, my understanding and my tongue slow and unaffecting. It may be each excitement administered from within may impel a swifter circulation in the outer channels of manner and power. The letters I get from the Vale serve this purpose better than any other compositions, so I beseech you to forgive the importunity of your nephew.

WALDO.

Emerson said afterwards that if the authorities had examined him upon his studies they would have refused him the license to preach.

In his case, however, there would be no harm in assuming the needful preparation for the ministry, and he was "approbated to preach" by the Middlesex Association of Ministers, October 10, 1826, and preached his first public sermon five days afterwards at Waltham.

He continued to make notes "for sermons by and by, if I prosper better than I at this present apprehend," but he hardly expected to have occasion to use them. He could take no exercise, and his eyesight and his general health grew worse.

(Journal: September, 1826.) "Health, action, happiness, — how they ebb from me! Poor Sisy-

phus saw his stone stop once, at least, when Orpheus chanted. I must roll mine up and up and up how high a hill."

In the midst of these sad reflections the thought of Edward returning from Europe with renewed health came in to revive him.

"But hark, I can hear on the eastern wind almost the harp of my coming Orpheus. He sets his sail and flies over the grim flood. Breathe soft the winds, and shine warmly on him the autumnal sun! It may be a contrary destiny will be too strong on me for the help of his hand. But speed his bark, for his heart is noble and his hand is strong, and the good of others is given into his hand. It would give me great pleasure to be well. It is mournful, the expectation of ceasing to be an object of hope that we may become objects of compassion, and then go gloomily to nothing, in the eye of this world, before we have had one opportunity of turning to the sun what we know is our best side."

He had but little opportunity to enjoy the companionship of his beloved brother, his one intimate; for, as the cold weather came on, his friends, and particularly his uncle Samuel Ripley, insisted that he must go to the South for the winter. He sailed in the ship Clematis for Charléston, S. C., on the 25th of November, a few weeks

after Edward's return, and arrived "after twelve weary days," to pass days as weary on land, until the increasing cold drove him yet farther south.

TO WILLIAM EMERSON, ESQ., NEW YORK.

CHARLESTON, S. C., *January* 6, 1827.

DEAR WILLIAM, — The cold has been so considerable as to deprive me of any signal benefit from the change of climate. Indeed, I am scared out, and 't is more than probable that I shall take passage for St. Augustine, in the sloop William, next Tuesday or Wednesday. I am not sick, but luke-sick. I have but a single complaint, a certain stricture on the right side of the chest, which always makes itself felt when the air is cold or damp; and the attempt to preach, or the like exertion of the lungs, is followed by an aching. The worst part of it is the deferring of hopes, and who can help being heart-sick? Moreover, it makes me dependent, inasmuch as my excellent friend in Waltham undertakes to supply me with funds, without appointing the pay-day. . . . I scribble in my blue-books, but have not succeeded in overcoming certain physical or metaphysical difficulties sufficiently to accomplish anything in the way of grave composition, as I had hoped. . . .

ST. AUGUSTINE, E. FLORIDA, *January* 29, 1827.

DEAR WILLIAM, — In about a week the sloop William will arrive here, which is to us what the Spanish galleon is to Manilla. It brings, at every trip to St. Augustine, inhabitants, victuals, newspapers, and letters. It is one of two sloops which make all the shipping of this port; its regular arrival and departure are the only events that agitate our provincial circles. If a cross-wind detain Captain Swasey, not only our news gets old, but our barrel of meal gets empty, and the lean kine begin to cast significant glances on the fat. I believe myself to be a great deal better than I was when I came. The air and sky of this ancient, fortified, dilapidated sand-bank of a town are really delicious. I am very decidedly relieved from my stricture, which seems to hold its tenure from Boreas. . . . It is a queer place. There are eleven or twelve hundred people, and these are invalids, public officers, and Spaniards, or rather Minorcans. What is done here? Nothing. It was reported in the morning that a man was at work in the public square, and all our family turned out to see him. What is grown here? Oranges, on which no cultivation seems to be bestowed, beyond the sluggish attention of one or two negroes to each grove of five or six hundred trees. The Americans live on their offices; the Spaniards keep billiard tables, or,

if not, they send their negroes to the mud to bring oysters, or to the shore to bring fish, and the rest of the time fiddle, mask, and dance. The Catholic clergyman lately represented at a masquerade the character of a drunken sailor, with laughable fidelity. I stroll on the sea-beach and drive a green orange over the sand with a stick. Sometimes I sail in a boat, sometimes I sit in a chair. I read and write a little, moulding sermons for an hour which may never arrive. For though there may be much preaching in the world to come, yet, as it will hardly be after the written fashion of this pragmatic world, if I go to the grave without finding vent for my gift, the universe, I fear, will afford it no scope beside.

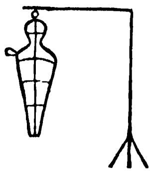
*January* 27, 1827.

DEAR CHARLES, — In these remote outskirts of civilization, the idea of home grows vivid, and grave men like me are sometimes pestered with a curiosity very becoming, doubtless, and very keen, to know what is done and said by certain beardless aspirants who are giving their days to philosophy and virtue. Whosoever is in St. Augustine resembles what may be also seen in St. Augustine, — the barnacles on a ledge of rocks which the tide has deserted: move they cannot; very uncomfortable they surely are; but they can hear from afar the roaring of the waters, and imagine the joy of the barnacles that are bathed thereby. The enter-

tainments of the place are two, billiards and the sea-beach, but those whose cloth abhors the billiards, — why, theirs is the sea-beach. Here, therefore, day by day do I parade, and think of my brother barnacles at a distance. Thus you see the poorest of us hath his ideal. A small gray-coated gnat is wagoner to the queen of faeries, and we who walk on the beach are seers of prodigious events and prophets of noble natures. Let us make the ordinary claims of our class It is not in us, it is not in us; we are but pipes on which another finger plays what stop it pleases.

He passed the winter at St. Augustine; getting what solace he might from the mild climate, the Old World look of the place and of the inhabitants, and the traces of a romantic past. The people, he says, in his journal, are "very much afraid of the Indians. All the old houses have very strong walls, and doors with apertures through which a musket can be discharged. They are delighted to find that under the American flag the Indians are afraid of the whites. Some of them, however, do not like to venture far out of the town at this day. 'But what are you afraid of? Don't you know General Jackson conquered all the Indians?' 'Yes, but General Jackens no here now.' 'But his son is:' for you know the Indians call Colonel Gadsden his son. 'Ay, ay, but then the Indians,

for all that.' I saw by the city gates two iron frames in the shape of a mummy, with rings on



the head. They were cases in which the Spanish governor had hung criminals upon a gibbet. There is a little iron loop on one side by the breast, in which a loaf of bread and a vessel of water were contained. Thus provided, the wretch was hung up, by suspending the ring over his head to a tree, and left to starve to death. They were lately dug up, full of bones.[1] The worthy father of the Catholic church here, by whose conversation I was not a little scandalized, has lately been arrested for debt and confined in St. Mark's. I went yesterday to the cathedral, full of great coarse toys, and heard this priest say mass; for his creditors have been indulgent, and released him for the present. A fortnight since I attended a meeting of the Bible Society. The treasurer of this institution is marshal of the district, and, by a somewhat unfortunate arrangement, had appointed a special meeting of the society and a slave-auction at the same time and place, one being in the Government House, and the other in the adjoining yard. One ear, therefore, heard the glad tidings of great joy, whilst the other was regaled with, 'Going, gentlemen, going!' and almost without changing our

[1] In the margin Emerson gives a sketch, which is here reproduced.

position we might aid in sending the Scriptures into Africa, or bidding on 'four children without the mother,' who had been kidnapped therefrom. There is something wonderfully piquant in the manners of the place, theological or civil. A Mr. Jerry, a Methodist minister, preached here two Sundays ago, who confined himself in the afternoon to some pretty intelligible strictures upon the character of a president of the Bible Society, who swears. The gentleman alluded to was present, and it really exceeded all power of face to be grave during the divine's very plain analysis of the motives which probably actuated the individual in seeking the office which he holds. It fairly beat the *Quousque Catilina*."

At St. Augustine his note-books contain a good deal of verse, descriptive of the place, and of himself as an exile from his home and one who did not love the look of foreign men; also prose reflections on his profession and on "the hour which must arrive, in the progress of society, when disputed truths in theology will cease to demand the whole life and genius of ministers in their elucidation. Then the champions of the Cross will be able to turn from this ungrateful task, in which ages have so unprofitably elapsed, of stripping off the manifold coats under which prejudice and falsehood had concealed the truth, and come at last to the dear and lofty employment of pointing out the secret but affecting passages in the history of the soul."

Here he made the acquaintance of a man who, although he was a Frenchman, a man of the world, and an open unbeliever in religion, impressed the young New England minister, who thought he did not love foreign faces, as few persons ever impressed him, and long remained in his memory as "a type of heroic manners and sweet-tempered ability." This was Achille Murat, son of Bonaparte's king of Naples, but domiciled here and married to an American woman. He had a plantation at Tallahassee, whither Emerson seems to have accompanied him on a visit, sleeping three nights under the pine-trees on the way; though it is not quite clear that he is speaking of himself. At all events they made the voyage to Charleston together, when Emerson returned northward on the approach of warm weather. He writes to his brother William:

CHARLESTON, *April* 7, 1827.

MY DEAR BROTHER, — I arrived here yesterday after a direful passage of nine days from St. Augustine. The ordinary one is one or two days. We were becalmed, tempest-tossed, and at last well-nigh starved, but the beloved brother bore it not only with equanimity, but pleasure, for my kind genius had sent me for my shipmate Achille Murat, the eldest son of the old King Joachim. He is now a planter at Tallahassee, and at this time on his way to visit his uncle at Bordentown. He is a philoso-

pher, a scholar, a man of the world; very sceptical but very candid, and an ardent lover of truth. I blessed my stars for my fine companion, and we talked incessantly. Much more of him when I shall see you. . . . As to health, I gain courage. I feel that my success depends upon it, — mine more than many others, and am therefore sensitive on the subject. I weigh 152 pounds [a gain of ten pounds during the winter]; to increase this weight I study very little, or, as Wamba might say, I study very much to increase my weight by studying very little; and, in journeying with this intent, I have not written a sermon since I left home. As to your wishes for my settlement, avaunt New York! I am a bigoted Yankee and your affectionate brother,

WALDO E.

TO MISS MARY EMERSON.

CHARLESTON, *April* 10, 1827.

I fancy myself wiser for my excursion. To be sure, one need not stir from the chimney-corner for that. It is very pleasant to retire to my shell and salute the comers, as they pass in procession, with a very majestic indifference; much as I would behold so many ingenious puppets which another hand is guiding. Nevertheless, I shall not deny that there are some who take such a strong hold of my attention that I am fain to quit my stoic fur, and fairly go out of my circle to shake hands and

converse with them. Now I know my kind aunt, with her electrical imagination, will think I am talking of women. Alack-a-day, with all the chivalry that is in my soul, backed by all the Muses, I pass in cold selfishness from Maine to Florida, and tremble lest I be destined for a monk. No, I was speaking of men, and another time I will give you an account of one whom it was my good fortune to meet in East Florida; a man of splendid birth and proud accomplishments, but a humble disciple in the school of truth.

ALEXANDRIA, D. C., *May* 15, 1827.

MY DEAR AUNT,—I am waiting here in pleasant durance until the sun will let me go home. For I am too delicate a body to brave the northeast winds with impunity. If I told you I had got well, I believe I deceived you and myself. For I am not sure I am a jot better or worse than when I left home in November; only in this, that I preached Sunday morning in Washington without any pain or inconvenience. I am still saddled with the villain stricture, and perhaps he will ride me to death. I have not lost my courage, or the possession of my thoughts. . . . It occurs to me lately that we have a great many capacities which we lack time and occasion to improve. If I read the "Bride of Lammermoor," a thousand imperfect suggestions arise in my mind, to which if I could

give heed, I should be a novelist. When I chance to light upon a verse of genuine poetry, — it may be in a corner of a newspaper, — a forcible sympathy awakens a legion of little goblins in the recesses of the soul, and if I had leisure to attend to the fine, tiny rabble I should straightway be a poet. In my day-dreams I do often hunger and thirst to be a painter; besides all the spasmodic attachments I indulge to each of the sciences and each province of letters. They all in turn play the coquette with my imagination, and it may be I shall die at the last a forlorn bachelor, jilted of them all. But all that makes these reveries noticeable is the indirect testimony they seem to bear to the most desirable attributes of human nature. If it has so many *conatus* (seekings after), as the philosophic term is, they are not in vain, but point to a duration ample enough for the entire satisfaction of them all. . . . On a sick-bed the name of Shakespeare will induce a feeling of vigor and, I may say, of longevity, which is all independent of the decay of the body. . . . I know there are some intelligences that see far into the structure of these our mortal entertainments, and hazard shrewd guesses at the principle of the arts, of manners, and can show the cause why now the balm works, and why now no spirit broods upon the face of the darkling waters. Will you not please to disclose some of these lights to your poor blinded but very affectionate nephew, WALDO.

I have been staying some time in the very hospitable house of Mr. Ladd, and design to set out this week for Philadelphia, and, after some delay there and at New York, for home. William has been delivering some lectures on German literature with honor to himself at New York.

*June*, 1827. Although I strive to keep my soul in a polite equilibrium, I belong to the good sect of the Seekers, and conceive that the dissolution of the body will have a wonderful effect on the opinions of all creed-mongers. How the flimsy sophistries that have covered nations — unclean cobwebs that have reached their long dangling threads over whole ages, issuing from the dark bowels of Athanasius and Calvin — will shrink to nothing at that sun-burst of truth! And nobody will be more glad than Athanasius and Calvin. In my frigidest moments, when I put behind me the subtler evidences, and set Christianity in the light of a piece of human history, — much as Confucius or Solyman might regard it, — I believe myself immortal. The beam of the balance trembles, to be sure, but settles always on the right side. For otherwise all things look so silly. The sun is silly, and the connection of beings and worlds such mad nonsense. I *say* this, I say that in pure reason I believe my immortality, because I have read and heard often that the doctrine hangs wholly on Christianity. This, to be sure, brings safety, but I think I get bare life without.

He reached home in June, and joined his mother at the Concord Manse (whither she had removed, by Dr. Ripley's invitation, when the Cambridge household was broken up), but soon afterwards established himself again at Divinity Hall. He had preached (old sermons) at St. Augustine, Charleston, Washington, Philadelphia, and New York, at all which places, except the first, Unitarian churches were already founded.

On his way home he heard from his brother Edward that he would be wanted at the First Church in Boston during a temporary absence of the minister, Mr. Frothingham. Upon his return he preached there for some weeks, and afterwards at Northampton and at New Bedford. But he found that his health was not sufficiently confirmed for regular work. He writes to William: —

BOSTON, *June* 24, 1827.

I am all clay; no iron. I meditate, now and then, total abdication of the profession, on the score of ill health. It is now the evening of the second Sunday that I have officiated all day at Chauncy Place. Told them this day I won't preach next Sunday, on that account. Very sorry, — for how to get my bread? Shall I commence author? Of prose or of verse? Alack, of both the unwilling Muse. Yet am I no whit the worse in appearance, I believe, than when in New York, but the lungs

in their spiteful lobes sing sexton and sorrow whenever I only ask them to shout a sermon for me. I have taken a room in Divinity Hall [Cambridge], and perhaps shall live there a little.

TO MISS MARY EMERSON.

CONCORD, *August* 17, 1827.

MY DEAR AUNT, — I sent Hume's Essays to Boston, to go by Robert, but they were neglected and not sent. I can lend them for three months from the time you get them, and will send them when an opportunity occurs. Baillie's Plays not easily procured. What do you want them for? Only as I do in my slovenly way of thinking, for a kind of better word-hunting, that a phrase which catches the eye may be tortured in the mind till it chances to suggest a new thought or an old one with a new face? I cannot, be sure, bring you down to my level, without great ignorance and discourtesy, but I wondered what you want Miss B. for. The instructor in a school is pleased to see the children play tricks with figures on a slate, and is glad if they are learning arithmetic by puzzles and in sport; and our governor consents that the apparent object of our intellectual existence on earth, the learning of language, should be accomplished by calculation or by fancy. Anyhow, there is a person, of very insignificant pretensions assuredly, but who believes he has sometimes owed

the best of his poor thoughts to this unhonorable expedient of bringing verses and phrases to the rack. The profit is much as the hangman's, who, doing his office skilfully, sometimes stands legatee to the very respectable sufferer. I would not trouble you with what I know you consider degrading particulars, but that they may go farther than more showy facts to teach what stuff we are made of. . . .

I preach half of every Sunday. When I attended church on the other half of a Sunday, and the image in the pulpit was all of clay, and not of tunable metal, I said to myself that if men would avoid that general language and general manner in which they strive to hide all that is peculiar, and would say only what was uppermost in their own minds, after their own individual manner, every man would be interesting. Every man is a new creation, can do something best, has some intellectual modes and forms, or a character the general result of all, such as no other agent in the universe has: if he would exhibit that, it must needs be engaging, must be a curious study to every inquisitive mind. But whatever properties a man of narrow intellect feels to be peculiar he studiously hides; he is ashamed or afraid of himself, and all his communications to men are unskilful plagiarisms from the common stock of thought and knowledge, and he is of course flat and tiresome.

. . . To ask questions is what this life is for; to answer them, the next, and those intermediate people who, like my correspondent, seem to partake of both. My eyes are not so strong as to let me be learned. I am curious to know what the Scriptures do in very deed say about that exalted person who died on Calvary, but I do think it, at this distance of time and in the confusion of language, to be a work of weighing of phrases and hunting in dictionaries. A portion of truth, bright and sublime, lives in every moment to every man. It is enough for safety, though not for education. . . .

Yours affectionately, WALDO.

TO WILLIAM.

CAMBRIDGE, *August* 31, 1827.

I am going to preach at Northampton for Mr. Hall, a few weeks. His church is a small one, and I shall be able to preach all day, I suppose, without inconvenience. . . . I aspire always to the production of present effect, thinking that if I succeed in that I succeed wholly. In a strong present effect is a permanent impression. . . . I am not so well but that the cold may make another Southern winter expedient.

*December* 14, 1827. I am living in Divinity Hall, to my great satisfaction, as refined, as easy, and as idle as a lord. My health quite the same stupid riddle it has been.

*February* 8, 1828. I am writing sermons. I am living cautiously; yea, treading on eggs, to strengthen my constitution. It is a long battle, this of mine betwixt life and death, and it is wholly uncertain to whom the game belongs. So I never write when I can walk, and especially when I can laugh. But my companions are few, and so sometimes I must read. Have you read that contemptuous chapter of Rousseau's "Emile," upon the slavery of the sick? Charles comes down to me occasionally; he is still the same honey-catcher of pleasure, favor, and honor that he hath been, and without paying for it, like Edward, with life and limb. He reads Plato and Aristophanes in Greek, and writes, as the president said of the brood, like hoary hairs. Edward looks so well in spite of those unutterable diseases of which he talks, that I think his chance is good to last long, quite as good as mine.

*April* 3, 1828. I am just returned from preaching all (Fast) day at Lexington, where I fill the pulpit till the return of Mr. Briggs. Perhaps Edward told you I was agreeably disappointed (for so it was) in escaping all engagements at the new [Hollis Street] church in Boston.[1] I am embarrassed at present, whenever any application is made to me that may lead to permanent engagements.

[1] Emerson was invited to compete there with several other candidates, but declined.

For I fancy myself dependent for my degree of health upon my lounging, capricious, unfettered mode of life; and I keep myself and slowly multiply sermons for a day, I hope, of firmer health and solid powers.

*April* 30, 1828. Why do you work so hard? Have you forgotten that all the Emersons overdo themselves? Don't you die of the leprosy of your race, ill-weaved ambition. Why, here am I lounging, on a system, for these many months, writing something less than a sermon a month. The consequence is I begin to mend, and am said to look less like a monument and more like a man. I can't persuade that wilful brother Edward of mine to use the same nostrum. I escape from the writing-desk as from a snake, and go straight to quarter myself on the first person I can think of in Divinity Hall. Especially I court laughing persons, and after a merry or only a gossiping hour, when the talk has been mere soap-bubbles, I have lost all sense of the mouse in my chest, am at ease, and can take my pen or book. I always take as much exercise as my hip can bear, and always at intervals and not in a mass. I have just refused an invitation to preach as candidate at Brighton. It is the third No to which I have treated the church applicant or vacant.

(Journal: July 10, 1828.) "It is a peculiarity

(I find by observation upon others) of humor in me, my strong propensity for strolling. I deliberately shut up my books in a cloudy July noon, put on my old clothes and old hat, and slink away to the whortleberry bushes, and slip with the greatest satisfaction into a little cow-path where I am sure I can defy observation. This point gained, I solace myself for hours with picking blueberries and other trash of the woods, far from fame behind the birch-trees. I seldom enjoy hours as I do these. I remember them in winter; I expect them in spring. I do not know a creature that I think has the same humor, or would think it respectable. Yet the friend whom I seek through the world, now in cities, now in wildernesses, now at sea, will know the delight of sauntering with the melancholy Jaques. I am not so enamored of liberty as to love to be idle. But the only evil I find in idleness is unhappiness. I love to be my own master when my spirits are prompt, when my brain is vegete and apt for thought. If I were richer, I should lead a better life than I do; that is, better divided and more able. I should ride on horseback a good deal; I should bowl, and create an appetite for my studies by intermixing some heat and labor in affairs. The chief advantage I should propose myself in wealth would be the independence of manner and conversation it would bestow, and which I eagerly covet and seldom quite attain, in some companies never."

In his incapacity for continued exertion he had thought, his brother Edward says, of giving up the ministry and going back to school-keeping. But this was an alternative he could hardly face; he decided to stay in Cambridge, pick up what he could from the lectures, and bide his time, hoping for better days.

It was during his second residence at Divinity Hall that Dr. Hedge met him there. I insert, with Dr. Hedge's kind permission, his account of the impression Emerson made upon him: —

"My acquaintance with Emerson began in 1828. He was then living in Divinity Hall, Cambridge, and, though not a member of the Divinity School, and taking no part in the exercises, was understood to be a candidate for the ministry, preparing himself in his own way for the function of preacher. There was no presage then, that I remember, of his future greatness. His promise seemed faint in comparison with the wondrous brilliancy of his younger brother, Edward Bliss Emerson, whose immense expectation was doomed never to be fulfilled. A still younger brother, Charles Chauncy, had also won admiration from contemporary youths; while Waldo had as yet given no proof of what was in him. He developed slowly; yet there was notable in him then, at the age of twenty-five, a refinement of thought and a selectness in the use of language which gave promise of an interesting

preacher to cultivated hearers. He never jested; a certain reserve in his manner restrained the jesting propensity and any license of speech in others. He kept a diary, in which he recorded whatever he had heard that seemed to him remarkable, during the day. I remember his coming to me one evening to learn some particulars in an anecdote with which Professor Norton had illustrated his remarks on a sermon just preached by one of the students in Divinity Hall Chapel. He could not sleep until he had made a note of the whole. I tried to interest him in German literature, but he laughingly said that as he was entirely ignorant of the subject, he should assume that it was not worth knowing. Later he studied German, mainly for the purpose of acquainting himself with Goethe, to whom his attention had been directed by Carlyle. He was slow in his movements, as in his speech. He never through eagerness interrupted any speaker with whom he conversed, however prepossessed with a contrary opinion. And no one, I think, ever saw him run. In ethics he held very positive opinions. Here his native independence of thought was manifest. 'Owe no conformity to custom,' he said, 'against your private judgment.' 'Have no regard to the influence of your example, but act always from the simplest motive.'"

Emerson remained a year at Divinity Hall, and

must have soon begun to gain in health, since before long he was able to preach pretty regularly every Sunday, in various places where the services of a young substitute happened to be in demand.

In Edward, the family tendency to disease was inflamed by a less prudent course into lasting illness, and finally an attack of mental derangement. His ardent spirit fretted at all obstacles, and kept him constantly on the stretch. He heaped employment upon employment, — studied law, was private tutor, reader, confidential agent, — until in this year he utterly broke down, had to give up everything and retire to Concord, where suddenly a paroxysm of insanity came upon him. Waldo writes to William: —

CONCORD, *June* 2, 1828.

We were all thoroughly scared, and I was hastened hither from New Concord. He had fainting fits and delirium, and had been strangely affected in his mind for a fortnight.

DIVINITY HALL, *June* 30.

We are born to trouble. I have just received a letter from Concord, to say that Edward is ill again, — worse than before; in a state of violent derangement, so as to require great restraint. Mother speaks of the hospital as perhaps a dismal necessity.

*July* 3. Yesterday we brought Edward down to Charlestown. His frenzy took all forms; but

what 's the need of relating them? There he lay, — Edward, the admired, learned, eloquent, striving boy, — a maniac. ' Dr. Wyman objected very strongly to taking him, saying it was a very peculiar case, and ought to be dealt with alone and under private care. He grants the great privilege of entire seclusion from all other patients. I cannot persuade myself to hope. But God can do all things. I have very little doubt that he will be restored to reason, but I fear he will now always hold it on the precarious tenure of the state of stomach.

As he expected, Edward soon recovered his reason, but never his health or his ability to carry on the studies and labors of his profession. He had to renounce his hoped-for career and exile himself to the West Indies, where he died a few years afterwards.

It was a severe blow to Waldo. Edward was nearer to him than any one; both their likeness and their unlikeness fitted them together; each was the other's sharpest critic and warmest admirer. And was not the same fate, he asked himself, in reserve for him?

"When I consider [he writes in his journal] the constitutional calamity of my family, which, in its falling upon Edward, has buried at once so many towering hopes, — with whatever reason, I have little apprehension of my own liability to the

same evil. I have so much mixture of *silliness* in my intellectual frame that I think Providence has tempered me against this. My brother lived and acted and spoke with preternatural energy. My own manner is sluggish; my speech sometimes flippant, sometimes embarrassed and ragged; my actions (if I may say so) are of a passive kind. Edward had always great power of face. I have none; I laugh, I blush, I look ill-tempered, against my will and against my interest. But all this imperfection, as it appears to me, is a ballast, as things go, is a defence. Woe is me, my brother, for you! Please God to rescue and restore him."

Among the places where Emerson had preached was Concord, New Hampshire (New Concord). Here, in December, 1827, he first saw Ellen Tucker, his future wife. When Edward, a year afterwards, left the Charlestown asylum, it was thought best that he should travel a little, and Waldo took him up into New Hampshire and to New Concord. He writes to William: —

DIVINITY HALL, *November* 10, 1828.

. . . Edward is a great deal better. I propose getting an engagement to preach in the country and taking him with me.

*December* 4. Edward is quite well, it seems. He is going with me day after to-morrow to Concord, N. H., to spend three Sundays, and then return to Concord, Mass.

At New Concord he met Miss Tucker again, with consequences which he relates in the following letter to his brother William: —

DIVINITY HALL, *December* 24, 1828.

MY DEAR BROTHER, — I have the happiness to inform you that I have been now for one week engaged to Ellen Louisa Tucker, a young lady who, if you will trust me, is the fairest and best of her kind. She is the youngest daughter of the late Beza Tucker, a merchant of Boston. The mother has now been three or four years the wife of Colonel W. A. Kent, of Concord, N. H. It is now just a year since I became acquainted with Ellen, at that house; but I thought I had got over my blushes and my wishes when now I determined to go into that dangerous neighborhood on Edward's account. But the presumptuous man was overthrown by the eyes and the ear, and surrendered at discretion. He is now as happy as it is safe in life to be. She is seventeen years old, and very beautiful, by universal consent.

Your affectionate brother, WALDO.

Miss Tucker appears, by universal consent, to have been a very lovely person; but her pathetic charm was due in part to the touch of a mortal malady, of which her brave and buoyant spirit made so light that even her physicians were deceived into hopes of her recovery.

BOSTON, *January* 28, 1829.

DEAR WILLIAM, — Since I wrote, my beautiful friend has made me very sorry by being very ill, and with that dangerous complaint which so often attacks the fairest in our stern climate; she has raised blood a week ago. Beauty has got better, and so I am better, but I have abstained, in much perplexity, from giving any answer to the call at the Old North [the Second Church of Boston], thinking that perhaps the doctors might tell Ellen that she ought to go away, and then — But now that I have talked with Dr. Jackson, and talked with the committee-men, I believe next Sunday I shall say yes. I wish you could see Ellen. Why can't you come to my ordination (if such thing shall be) and see the Queen of Sheba and of me?

*February* 20, 1829. Ellen is mending day by day. 'T would take more time than I can spare to tell how excellent a piece of work she is. She trifles so much with her ails, and loses no jot of spirits, that we talk grave only when asunder.

Some months before this he had written to his brother: "Mr. Ware [Reverend Henry Ware, Jr., minister of the Second Church] is ill again, and all good men are sorry. You see what lies before your brother for his mortal lot. To be a good

minister and healthy is not given. The event will probably confine me where I am for the winter. It has some obvious advantages over any other service, but involves more labor."

Emerson had been invited to fill the pulpit during Mr. Ware's illness, but when it was reported that a professorship at the Cambridge Divinity School had been offered to Mr. Ware, and that he would probably accept it and thereby vacate his pulpit, Emerson declined to preach there any longer, feeling that if the place was to be regarded as open to candidates he would not monopolize it. "If I am settled [he said], I choose it should be on my own merits, and not because I have kept a better man from being heard."

Mr. Ware wished to resign his office, but was persuaded to retain it for a while, the parish appointing a colleague to perform the services during his absence. Emerson was chosen, receiving, he tells William, "seventy-four out of seventy-nine votes; and three given for Dr. Follen were by one person holding three pews, who declares himself nowise unfriendly to Mr. E., but wants to wait a little. Everything in reference to this call is in the highest degree gratifying, as far as a decided and strong good-will can be so."

## CHAPTER IV.

EMERSON AT THE SECOND CHURCH. — HIS MARRIAGE. — THE DEATH OF HIS WIFE. — RESIGNATION OF HIS OFFICE. — VISIT TO EUROPE.

1829–1832.

EMERSON was ordained as colleague of Mr. Ware on the 11th of March, 1829. A few weeks afterwards, Mr. Ware deciding to try the effect of a voyage, and upon his return to accept the Divinity School professorship, Emerson, with Mr. Ware's "complete satisfaction," became the sole incumbent.

In September he was married. They went to live in Chardon Place, and invited his mother to join them. He might well think that good days were preparing for him. He had promptly and easily reached a position that might satisfy all his aspirations: he was the head of an honored church; he was married to a wife who was "a bright revelation to me of the best nature of woman;" he was able to provide a comfortable home for his mother, and a gathering-place for the brothers; lastly, his health, though not entirely assured, was for the time free from active disturbance. Yet the

fair prospect seems to have been clouded over by a vague forecast of ill. He writes to Miss Mary Emerson: —

BOSTON, *January* 6, 1829.

MY DEAR AUNT, — You know — none can know better — on what straitened lines we have all walked up to manhood. In poverty and many troubles the seeds of our prosperity were sown. Now all these troubles appeared a fair counterbalance to the flatteries of fortune. I lean always to that ancient superstition (if it is such, though drawn from a wise survey of human affairs) which taught men to beware of unmixed prosperity; for Nemesis kept watch to overthrow the high. Well, now look at the altered aspect. William has begun to live by the law. Edward has recovered his reason and his health. Bulkeley was never more comfortable in his life. Charles is prospering in all ways. Waldo is comparatively well and comparatively successful, — far more so than his friends, out of his family, anticipated. Now I add to all this felicity a particular felicity which makes my own glass very much larger and fuller, and I straightway say, Can this hold? Will God make me a brilliant exception to the common order of his dealings, which equalizes destinies? There 's an apprehension of reverse always arising from success. But is it my fault that I am happy, and cannot I trust the Goodness that has uplifted to

uphold me? I cannot find in the world, without or within, any antidote, any bulwark against this fear, like this: the frank acknowledgment of unbounded dependence. Let into the heart that is filled with prosperity the idea of God, and it smooths the giddy precipices of human pride to a substantial level; it harmonizes the condition of the individual with the economy of the universe. I should be glad, dear aunt, if you, who are my oldest friend, would give me some of your meditations upon these new leaves of my fortune. You have always promised me success, and now when it seems to be coming I choose to direct to you this letter, which I enter as a sort of protest against my Ahriman; that, if I am called, after the way of my race, to pay a fatal tax for my good, I may appeal to the sentiment of collected anticipation with which I saw the tide turn and the winds blow softly from the favoring west.

This tone of foreboding did not belong to Emerson's disposition, — nothing was farther from him than the inclination to "borrow trouble;" yet it does not appear strange when we remember that his youth and early manhood had been passed in a struggle with constantly recurring invalidism, and that at this time, in spite of his constitutional incuriosity about the future, he must have obscurely felt the doom that was hanging, unavertible, over those dearest to him.

Meantime he set himself to his work, with good heart and without any forecast of the disappointment he was to meet in that also. In two sermons preached on the Sunday after his ordination, "complying with a most reasonable usage," he set forth his views of the minister's duties, without any hint of innovation except the warning that he should not scruple to introduce into the pulpit homely illustrations and allusions, where they could be introduced with advantage. Our usage of preaching, he says, is too straitened: —

"It does not apply itself to all the good and evil that is in the human bosom. It walks in a narrow round; it harps on a few and ancient strings. It is much addicted to a few words; it holds on to phrases when the lapse of time has changed their meaning. Men imagine that the end and use of preaching is to expound a text, and forget that Christianity is an infinite and universal law; that it is the revelation of a Deity whose being the soul cannot reject without denying itself, a rule of action which penetrates into every moment and into the smallest duty. If any one hereafter should object to the want of sanctity of my style and the want of solemnity in my illustrations, I shall remind him that the language and the images of Scripture derive all their dignity from their association with divine truth, and that our Lord condescended to explain himself by allusions to every

homely fact, and, if he addressed himself to the men of this age, would appeal to those arts and objects by which we are surrounded; to the printing-press and the loom, to the phenomena of steam and of gas, to free institutions and a petulant and vain nation."

The duty of a Christian minister, also, he says, "imperiously demands the critical knowledge of the Christian Scriptures, which are to be considered the direct voice of the Most High. But it does not less demand the contemplation of his benevolence and his might in his works. It demands a discipline of the intellect, but more than all. it demands a training of the affections. Whatever else can be spared, this is essential."

"Emerson's early sermons [says Dr. Hedge, in the reminiscences from which I have quoted] were characterized by great simplicity and an unconventional, untheological style, which brought him into closer *rapport* with his hearers than was commonly achieved by the pulpit in those days. Hearers of an orthodox turn were shocked by what seemed to them unsanctified discourse, but those who listened with unprejudiced and appreciative minds, especially the young, were charmed by his preaching as by no other. He won his first admirers in the pulpit."

One of his congregation of that time tells me that the chief impression on his boyish mind was

that of the reality given to the things of religion. They were as real as the things in the street. To the same point, Miss Margaret Fuller, who came to hear him, and brought others with her to the unfashionable precincts of the Old North. "I cannot care much for preached elevation of sentiment [she says], unless I have seen it borne out by some proof, as in case of Mr. Emerson. It is so easy for a cultivated mind to excite itself with that tone." Only two of Emerson's pulpit discourses have been printed: the sermon at the ordination of the Reverend H. B. Goodwin as Dr. Ripley's colleague at Concord, in 1830, and the sermon on the Lord's Supper, at the Second Church, when he gave up his charge there.[1] The rest, to the number of one hundred and seventy-one, still lie in manuscript, and he expressed his desire that they should so remain. What strikes me in reading them over is first of all the absence of rhetoric. There is no attempt at the eloquence or magniloquence which was then in vogue, and of which Emerson in his earlier days had been a warm admirer. All this had long since lost its charm for him. In his journal in 1826, he writes: "The *aliquid immensum*, etc., is best left to each man's youthful and private meditations. This straining to say what is unutterable, and vain retching with the imbecile use of great words, is nauseous to sound

[1] *Collected Writings*, xi. 9.

sense and good taste. 'T is a forgotten maxim that accuracy is essential to beauty."

I am not so much struck with any innovation upon the current style of preaching, or with the homely illustrations from every-day life, which might be expected from the opening discourse. Here and there an unclerical expression occurs, but in general all is within the conventions of the Unitarian pulpit. Their novelty, so far as I am able to judge, lies in the prominence that is given to ethical principles over doctrine; and even this does not seem very marked. The ideas of the Essays, — the idea that every action brings its own reward; that no ill can befall us without our connivance; that every day is a Judgment Day; that we are not to read our duty in the eyes of others, but are to settle everything anew for ourselves, and especially the things that are commonly thought to be finally settled; that spiritual truth is its own evidence, and needs no other, — these appear more and more as time goes on, but in general they are presented in Scriptural language, as if they belonged to the body of accepted doctrine.

It is to be remembered, however, that we, in these days, are accustomed to a style of preaching in which the Christian Scriptures are used as the illustration rather than the foundation of religious truth, so that we are perhaps less alive to what

then might seem new and startling. However this may be, it is needless to show that there is no trace of accommodation to popular opinion, in the sense of putting on the semblance of any belief that Emerson himself did not share. But, as he never gave much attention to the process by which his convictions were reached, he may have been led by his position to support his beliefs by arguments which had more weight with his hearers than with himself. This would give to the sermons, as we read them, a tinge of conventionality which doubtless disappeared when they were heard. And what Emerson says of Dr. Channing, that his discourses lose their best in losing his eye and voice, is no doubt equally true of his own: their effect was immediate and personal, not to be detached from his presence. Of their effectiveness there can be no doubt. Emerson, as Dr. Hedge says, won his first admirers in the pulpit, with no prestige to help him, and they seem to have found in him there the same qualities which made the charm of his lectures. One of his regular hearers wrote of him: —

"In looking back on his preaching I find he has impressed truths to which I always assented, in such a manner as to make them appear new, like a clearer revelation. He is truly an angel to me, a real messenger from heaven. I have no pleasure, no mental excitement, so great as that of listening to

him. . . . His first object was to lead us to God; to withdraw the veil that is between our hearts and Him."

The impression he made is described by Mr. Congdon, in an often-quoted passage:[1] —

"One day there came into our pulpit [at New Bedford] the most gracious of mortals, with a face all benignity, who gave out the first hymn and made the first prayer as an angel might have read and prayed. Our choir was a pretty good one, but its best was coarse and discordant after Emerson's voice. I remember of the sermon only that it had an indefinite charm of simplicity and wisdom, with occasional illustrations from nature, which were about the most delicate and dainty things of the kind which I had ever heard. I could understand them, if not the fresh philosophical novelties of the discourse."

Emerson remained at the Second Church a little more than three years, until the summer of 1832, and then broke off his connection with it (and, as it turned out, his career as a settled minister), in consequence of a difference of opinion concerning the rite of the Lord's Supper, which he found himself unable to regard as a sacrament, established by Christ, and in his name by the Church, for his followers in all ages.

[1] *Reminiscences of a Journalist.* By Charles Taber Congdon. Boston, 1880: p. 33.

He was ready to continue the service, provided the use of the elements was dropped and the rite made merely one of commemoration. This he proposed to the church in June, 1832. His proposal was referred to a committee, who reported shortly afterwards, expressing their entire confidence in him, but declining to advise any change. They did not conceive it to be their business to discuss the nature of the rite, or the considerations that might recommend it to the minds of different persons; it was enough that it was generally acceptable and helpful, on whatever grounds.

It remained for Emerson to decide whether he would resign his office rather than administer the Communion in the usual form, and he went up to the White Hills for a week or so to think it over, during a suspension of the church services occasioned by some repairs of the meeting-house. It was a difficult decision, for there was much to be said in favor of the view which was urged upon him by his friends, that he ought not to allow a scruple about forms to break up a connection which was on the whole satisfactory and profitable on both sides. He could not expect to find another church so ready to accord him a friendly and partial consideration.

(Journal.) "*Ethan Allen Crawford's, White Mountains, July* 14, 1832. A too benevolent man is at the mercy of every fop he meets and of

every household. His willingness to please withdraws him from himself. Sure he ought to please, but not to please at the expense of his own view, by accommodation. How hard to command the soul, or to solicit the soul! Many of our actions, many of mine, are done to solicit the soul. I would think, I would feel. I would be the vehicle of that divine principle that lurks within, and of which life has afforded only glimpses enough to assure me of its being. We know little of its laws, but we have observed that a north wind, clear, cold, with its scattered fleet of drifting clouds, braced the body, and seemed to reflect a similar abyss of spiritual heaven between clouds in our minds; or a brisk conversation moved this mighty deep; or a word in a book was made an omen of by the mind and surcharged with meaning; or a cloudy, lonely walk, 'striking the electric chain wherewith we are darkly bound.' And having this experience, we strive to avail ourselves of it, and propitiate the divine inmate to speak to us again out of clouds and darkness.

"The good of going into the mountains is that life is reconsidered; it is far from the slavery of your own modes of living, and you have opportunity of viewing the town at such a distance as may afford you a just view. But the hours pass on, creep or fly, and bear me and my fellows to the decisions of questions of duty, to the crises of

our fate, and to the solution of the mortal problem. . . . The hour of decision. It seems not worth while for them who charge others with exalting forms above the moon to fear forms themselves with extravagant dislike. I am so pleased that my *aliquid ingenii* may be brought into useful action, let me not bury my talent in the earth in my indignation at this windmill. Though the thing may be useless and even pernicious, do not destroy what is good and useful in a high degree rather than comply with what is hurtful in a small degree. The communicant celebrates, on a foundation either of authority or of tradition, an ordinance which has been the occasion to thousands — I hope to thousands of thousands — of contrition, of gratitude, of prayer, of faith, of love, of holy living. Far be it from any of my friends — God forbid it be in my heart — to interrupt any occasion thus blessed of God's influences upon the human mind. I will not, because we may not all think alike of the means, fight so strenuously against the means as to miss of the end which we all value alike. I think Jesus did not mean to institute a perpetual celebration, but that a commemoration of him would be useful. Others think that Jesus did establish this one. We are agreed that one is useful, and we are agreed, I hope, in the way in which it must be made useful, namely, by each one making it an original commemoration. I know

very well that it is a bad sign in a man to be too conscientious and stick at gnats. The most desperate scoundrels have been the over-refiners. Without accommodation society is impracticable. But this ordinance is esteemed the most sacred of religious institutions, and I cannot go habitually to an institution which they esteem holiest with indifference or dislike."

He found that he could not comply. Upon his return he set forth in a sermon [1] the grounds of his dissent, and announced his intention of resigning his charge, which he did on the same day. The church was very unwilling to part with him, and efforts were made to arrive at some arrangement. Several meetings were held, and the proprietors of pews were called in, as having "an undoubted right to retain Mr. Emerson as their pastor, without reference to the opposition of the church." At length, after two adjournments and much discussion, it was decided by thirty votes against twenty-four to accept his resignation. It was voted at the same time to continue his salary for the present.

His cutting himself adrift rather than submit to the slight constraint of the Unitarian forms was thought by some of his brother ministers rather "Quakerish," and there were loud whispers of mental derangement. He on his side seems to have been not merely pained but disappointed at the re-

[1] *Collected Writings*, xi. 9.

sult. He seems to have thought it not impossible that the church would agree to his terms. But the difference of views about the Communion Service was in truth only the symptom of a deeper difference, which would in any case sooner or later have made it impossible for him to retain his office; a disagreement not so much about particular doctrines or observances as about their sanction, the authority on which all doctrines and observances rest. This had begun to declare itself when he was at the Divinity School, listening to the schemes of the Liberal theologians, and at the same time meditating on Coleridge's proposed reconstruction of Christian theology. He writes to Miss Mary Emerson: —

*September* 23, 1826.

My dear Aunt, — Is it not true that modern philosophy, by a stout reaction, has got to be very conversant with feelings? Bare reason, cold as cucumber, was all that was tolerated, till men grew disgusted at the skeleton, and have given him in ward into the hands of his sister; blushing, shining, changing sentiment. Be that as it may, it is one of the feelings of modern philosophy that it is wrong to regard ourselves so much in an historical light as we do, — putting Time between God and us, — and that it were fitter to regard every moment of the existence of the universe as a new creation, and all as a revelation proceeding each

moment from the Divinity to the mind of the observer. It is certain that the moral world, as it exists to the man within the breast, is illustrated, interpreted, defined, by the positive institutions that exist in the world; that, in the aspect disclosed to a mind in this hour opening in these parts of the earth, Christianity appears the priest, the expounder of God's moral law. It is plainly a fit representative of the Law-giver. It speaks the voice God might speak. We ought not, therefore, to have this mighty regard to the long antiquity of its growth, and to the genuineness or fallacy of pretensions on which the dust of sixteen or eighteen centuries has gathered, but consider its present condition as a thing entirely independent of the ways and means whereby it came into that condition, and, neither seeing what it was nor hearing what it said to past generations, examine what it is, and hear what it saith to us. This is probably the most plausible statement of the doctrine of relative and absolute truth. That it is absolutely true is perhaps capable of evidence. That it is relatively true is certain; and thus it may procure for us all the eternal good it ever pretended to offer.

In this novel application of Hume's doctrine or rather suggestion, of the "relativity of human knowledge," Emerson was influenced by Coleridge, and, through Coleridge, by Kant and Schelling.

Coleridge's zeal in behalf of the Anglican Church somewhat lessened him in Emerson's eyes, but he readily absorbed the transcendentalism that lay beneath it, — the reliance on reason as the organ of universal ideas. He writes to Miss Emerson: —

"*December* 10, 1829. I am reading Coleridge's 'Friend' with great interest. You don't speak of him with respect. He has a tone a little lower than greatness, but what a living soul, what a universal knowledge! I like to encounter these citizens of the universe, that believe the mind was made to be spectator of all, inquisitor of all, and whose philosophy compares with others much as astronomy with the other sciences; taking post at the centre, and, as from a specular mount, sending sovereign glances to the circumference of things. One more instance of what is always interesting, the restless human soul bursting the narrow boundaries of antique speculation, and mad to know the secrets of that unknown world on whose brink it is sure it is standing, — yea, now and then can overhear passing words of the talk of the inhabitants. At least I become acquainted with one new mind I never saw before, an acquisition not unimportant when it is remembered that, so gregarious are even intellectual men, Aristotle thinks for thousands, and Bacon for tens of thousands; and so, in enumerating the apparently manifold philosophies and forms of thought, we should not be able to

count more than seven or eight minds. 'T is the privilege of his independence and his labor to be counted for one school. His theological speculations are at least God viewed from one position."

Emerson's Swedenborgian friend, Sampson Reed, was also of influence with him, — not to draw him towards the Swedenborgian forms, any more than Coleridge drew him towards the Anglican, but rather to lead him to detach religion more and more from all forms.

(Journal.) "*Chardon Street, October* 9, 1829. I am glad to see that interpretations of Scripture like those of the New Jerusalem Church can be accepted in our community. The most spiritual and sublime sense is put upon various historical passages of the New Testament. The interpretation is doubtless wholly false. The Apostle John and our Saviour meant no such things. But the sentiment which the commentator puts into their mouths is nevertheless true and eternal. The wider that sentiment can be spread, and the more effect it can have on men's lives, the better. And if the fool-part of man must have the lie; if truth is a pill that can't go down till it is sugared with superstition, — why, then I will forgive the last, in the belief that truth will enter into the soul so natively and assimilantly that it will become part of the soul, and so remain when the falsehood grows dry and peels off."

This exaltation of the religious sentiment above the interpretations of the understanding, while it made Emerson charitable and even tender towards every form of genuine religion, was a habit of mind more appropriate to the solitary thinker than to the parish minister. In the first year of his ministry, he writes to Miss Mary Emerson: —

BOSTON, *December* 10, 1829.

What a fight all our lives long between prudence and sentiment; though you contradicted me once, when I tried to make a sentence that life was embarrassed by prudentials. The case in point is this: my soul is chained down even in its thoughts, where it should be freest, lordliest. The Christmas comes, — a hallowed anniversary to me as to others, yet am I not ready to explore and explain the way of the star-led wizards; am looking at the same truth which they sought, on quite another side and in novel relations. I could think and speak to some purpose, I say, if you would take what I have got; but if I must do what seems so proper and reasonable, — conform to the occasion, — I can only say what is trite, and will, 't is likely, be ineffectual. This is a very disadvantageous example of that warfare that is in all professional life between the heroical and the proper.

And in his journal: —

"*January* 10, 1832. It is the best part of the man, I sometimes think, that revolts most against his being a minister. His good revolts from official goodness. If he never spoke or acted but with the full consent of his understanding, if the whole man acted always, how powerful would be every act and every word! Well, then, — or ill, then, — how much power he sacrifices by conforming himself to say or do in other folks' time, instead of in his own! The difficulty is that we do not make a world of our own, but fall into institutions already made, and have to accommodate ourselves to them to be useful at all; and this accommodation is, I say, a loss of so much integrity, and of course of so much power. But how shall the droning world get on if all its *beaux esprits* recalcitrate upon its approved forms and accepted institutions, and quit them all in order to be single-minded? The double-refiners would produce at the other end the double-damned."

"*January* 30. Every man hath his use, no doubt, and every one makes ever the effort, according to the energy of his own character, to suit his external condition to his inward constitution. If his external condition does not admit of such accommodation, he breaks the form of his life and enters a new one which does. If it will admit of such accommodation, he gradually bends it to his mind. Thus Finney can preach, and so his prayers

are short. Parkman can pray, and so his prayers are long. Lowell can visit, and so his church service is less. But what shall poor I do, who can neither visit, nor pray, nor preach, to my mind?"

The voluntary prayer, as a regular part of Congregational worship, might have proved itself an obstacle to him sooner than the Communion Service, but that there was less in it of rigid form. In the sermon after his ordination, he said of prayer: "It is the fruit of a frame of mind; it is to be sought in the affections, and not in the intellect; in its excellence its power is singular; it doth soothe, refresh, and edify the soul as no other exercises can." Yet, as a stated public observance, which was to take place whether the participants were in the right frame of mind or not, there were objections to it which he had long felt. In his journal at the Divinity School he writes: —

"*April* 12, 1826. Most men who have given their attention to the prayers publicly offered in a Christian congregation have felt in the institution an unsuitableness. . . . The truth is, public prayer is rather the offspring of our notions of what ought to be than of what is. It has grown out of the sentiment of a few rather than the reason of many. Indeed, we have said all, and I am sorry to say it, in characterizing it as an appeal to our veneration instead of our sympathy. That it is right to ask God's blessing on us is certainly reasonable. That

it is right to enumerate our wants, our sins, even our sentiments, in addresses to this unseen Idea seems just and natural. And it may be probably averred with safety that there has been no man that never prayed. That persons whom like circumstances and like feelings assimilate, that a family, that a picked society of friends, should unite in this service does not, I conceive, violate any precept of just reason. It is certainly a question of more difficult solution whether a promiscuous assemblage, such as is contained in houses of public worship and collected by such motives, can unite with propriety and advantage in any petition such as is usually offered by one man."

He conformed to the usage without making any objection, so far as I know, as long as he remained at the Second Church; though he sometimes found himself led, he told Mrs. Ripley, to say what he did not mean. Thenceforth he declined engagements that involved this obligation; yet he generally, I believe, when he was in the pulpit, offered prayer in his own fashion, and his prayers were noted for their impressiveness.

It is plain from all sides that his place was not in the pulpit of any existing church; if he looked back with regret to the career that was thus cut short, it was because he looked upon it, as he said of prayer, as it ought to be, not as it was.

(Journal.) "I have sometimes thought that in order to be a good minister it was necessary to leave the ministry. The profession is antiquated. In an altered age we worship in the dead forms of our forefathers. Were not a Socratic Paganism better than an effete superannuated Christianity? The whole world holds on to formal Christianity, and nobody teaches the essential truth, the heart of Christianity, for fear of shocking, etc. Every teacher, when once he finds himself insisting with all his might upon a great truth, turns up the ends of it at last with a cautious showing how it is agreeable to the life and teaching of Jesus. This cripples his teaching; it bereaves the truth he inculcates of more than half its force by representing it as something secondary, that can't stand alone."

I think he felt this to be true in some degree of himself, — that his position had involved, not indeed any insincerity, but some degree of conformity; and this feeling gave him a sort of grudge against preaching.

"I hate goodies [he writes in his journal]. I hate goodness that preaches. Goodness that preaches undoes itself. Goodies make us very bad. We will almost sin to spite them."

He preferred the goodness that grows on some "wild gentile stock," like Montaigne: —

"No effeminate parlor workman is he, on an idea

got at an evening lecture or a young men's debate, but roundly tells what he saw or what he thought of when he was riding on horseback or entertaining a troop at his *château*. A gross, semi-savage indecency debases his book, and ought doubtless to turn it out-of-doors; but the robustness of his sentiments, the generosity of his judgment, the downright truth, without fear or favor, I do embrace with both arms. It is wild and savory as sweet-fern. Henry the Eighth loved to see a man; and it is exhilarating once in a while to come across a genuine Saxon stump, a wild, virtuous man, who knows books, but gives them their right place in his mind, lower than his reason. Books are apt to turn reason out-of-doors. You find men talking everywhere from their memories, instead of from their understanding. If I stole this thought from Montaigne, as is very likely, I don't care. I should have said the same myself." [1]

"In order to present the bare idea of virtue, it is necessary to go quite out of our circumstance and custom; else it will be instantly confounded with the poor decency or inanition, the poor ghost that wears its name in good society. Therefore it is that we fly to the pagans, and use the name and relations of Socrates, Confucius, Menu, Zoroaster; not that these are better or as good as Jesus and Paul (for they have not uttered so deep moralities),

[1] To M. M. E., December 25, 1831.

but because they are good algebraic terms, not liable to confusion of thought like those we habitually use. So Michael Angelo's sonnets to Vittoria Colonna we see to be mere rhapsodies to virtue; and in him, a savage artist, they are as unsuspicious, uncanting, as if a Spartan or an Arab spoke them."[1]

As to his performance of the other pastoral duties, — the visiting of the sick or the well, and generally his personal and social relations to his flock, — Emerson says of himself that he did not excel, like Dr. Charles Lowell, in "domiciliaries;" and Dr. Chandler Robbins, his successor at the Second Church, had a story of some Revolutionary veteran on his death-bed summoning the minister for the appropriate consolations, and rising in his wrath when Emerson showed some hesitation, as he thought, at handling his spiritual weapons: "Young man, if you don't know your business, you had better go home." Dr. William Hague, also, minister of the First Baptist Church in Hanover Street when Emerson was at the Old North, says that once when Emerson was to take part with him in a funeral service, the sexton said that "while Mr. Emerson's people think so highly of him, he does not make his best impression at a funeral; in fact, he does not seem to be at ease at all, but rather shy and retiring; to tell the truth,

[1] *Lectures on Human Life*, 1838.

in my opinion that young man was not born to be a minister."[1]

It is easy to believe that Emerson, with the best will, might find difficulty at such times, for he had no extraordinary share of that facility of adapting himself to an occasion and taking the appropriate tone which is natural to many men, equally sincere, and forms certainly an important qualification for the sacred office. But I do not find that any deficiency was generally felt.

The other stated duty which he had emphasized in the sermon after his ordination, the critical study and exposition of the Christian Scriptures, received due attention from him. He continued the weekly exegetical lectures established by Mr. Ware, and I find among his papers careful notes and discussion of authorities prepared by him for this purpose.

On every side he did what he could to comply with the requisitions of the place he had chosen, yet on every side the situation was a strained one, demanding constant efforts to do something which was well worth doing, no doubt, but to which he did not always feel an inward call. It became clear to him that he must escape from it, whatever the decision might cost him, and however uncertain might be the outlook.

[1] "Life Notes." By Rev. William Hague, D. D. *Watchman and Reflector*, May 24, 1883.

TO WILLIAM EMERSON, ESQ., NEW YORK.

BOSTON, *November* 19, 1832.

DEAR WILLIAM, — The severing of our strained cord that bound me to the church is a mutual relief. It is sorrowful to me and to them in a measure, for we were both suited and hoped to be mutually useful. But though it will occasion me some (possibly much) temporary embarrassment, yet I walk firmly toward a peace and freedom which I plainly see before me, albeit afar. Shall I pester you with half the projects that sprout and bloom in my head, — of action, literature, philosophy? Am I not to have a magazine of my ownty-donty, scorning co-operation and taking success by storm? The vice of these undertakings in general is that they depend on many contributors, who all speak an average sense, and no one of them utters his own individuality. Yet, that the soul of a man should speak out, and not the soul general of the town or town-pump, is essential to all eloquence. The objection to a paper conducted by one man is the limits of human strength. The Goethe or Schiller that would do it must have a constitution that does not belong to every lean, lily-livered aspirant of these undigesting days. But give me time, give me strength and co-operation on my own terms, — *κὰι τὴν γῆν κινήσω* [I will move the earth]. Will we not sweep the tables of Athenæums and the

escritoires of the learned and the fair clean of all the American periodical paper, — green, yellow, olive, and gray? What assistance can I not command? Give me my household gods against the world, William and Edward and Charles. Why, the plot is the best plot that ever was laid. Wait and see what a few months shall do to hatch this fine egg. Yours affectionately, WALDO.

But, while writing in this light tone, he was in truth weighed down by an accumulation of burdens. The death of his wife, early in the year before, had bereft him of that bright and buoyant presence, a perpetual sunshine in his house. He had tenderly watched and cared for her in the steady progress of her malady; had taken her to the South in the first year of their marriage, to escape the harsh spring winds; and was preparing in the February of the next year to go again, when the end came, and overshadowed his life with sadness. His diary for a long time is interrupted by exclamations of sorrow and bits of plaintive verse, and he was in the habit (says his cousin, Dr. Haskins), until his departure for Europe, of regularly walking out in the early morning to visit her grave in Roxbury.[1] His mother wrote to Ed-

[1] *Ralph Waldo Emerson; his Maternal Ancestors, with some Reminiscences of him.* By David Greene Haskins, D. D. Boston, 1886: p. 45. In the second edition, which has appeared since the

ward to come home from Porto Rico and "take care of the lonely brother," but that could not be; and now Charles had been obliged by ill health to leave his law studies and join Edward. They returned together the next summer (1832); Edward for a short visit to his home, and he and Waldo met for the last time. Now Waldo's health also broke down; the thirtieth year, which proved fatal to Edward, and which Charles did not quite reach, was the critical period for him too. Charles writes to Miss Mary Emerson: —

BOSTON, *November* 26, 1832.

MY DEAR AUNT, — Waldo is sick. His spirits droop; he looks to the South, and thinks he should like to go away. I never saw him so disheartened. When a man would be a reformer, he wants to be strong. When a man has stepped out of the intrenchments of influence and station, he would fain feel his powers unimpaired and his hope firm. One does not like to feel that there is any doom upon him or his race; it seems to quench the fire and freedom of his hopes and purposes. A man desires — 't is his nature — to be born for action, not for suffering; yet what hero like the

foregoing pages of this memoir were in print, will be found many interesting illustrations, among others portraits of Emerson's father and mother, a view of the First Church, and one of the house at Canterbury.

unmurmuring victim of wasted or torturing disease?

*December* 10. Waldo is meditating a departure for Italy. He thinks of sailing in a vessel which goes this week to Malta, and so finding his way from thence to Naples. He is a little better, but appears to need a setting-up, which a voyage will give him. I was very loath to have him go to Europe: it does not matter much where such as he go, I suppose. Foreign skies cannot change him; yet it almost always breaks up the life of quiet progress, and transforms one's ways of thinking and behaving. I felt like you; I wished him well; that he might work out his way up-hill, and triumph in the end by his own force of character. Now, things seem flying to pieces, and I don't know when they will again be put together and he harnessed in (what I think he requires) the labors of a daily calling. So vulgar and illiberal are my notions. I do not doubt he may write and be a fine thinker, all alone by himself; but I think he needs to be dragged closer to people by some practical vocation, however it may irk his tastes. The disappointment grows upon me as I go, Sunday after Sunday, and hear ordinary preachers, and remember what a torch of kindling eloquence has been snuffed out in such an insignificant fashion. We must even let the bubbles break, be they what color they may.

We break up housekeeping forthwith. Mother

goes to board, probably at Newton, with aunt Ladd. I shall remain in the city.

Waldo writes on the same day to William: —

My dear Brother, — My malady has proved so obstinate and comes back as often as it goes away, that I am now bent on taking Dr. Ware's advice, and seeing if I cannot prevent these ruinous relapses by a sea-voyage. I proposed to make a modest trip to the West Indies, and spend the winter with Edward; but in a few hours the dream changed into a purpureal vision of Naples and Italy, and that is the rage of yesterday and to-day in Chardon Street. A vessel sails this week for Sicily, and at this moment it seems quite probable I shall embark in her. Mr. [Abel] Adams and mother are smoothing the way.

He wrote a letter of farewell[1] to his people, not being able to address them face to face, and on Christmas Day, 1832, sailed from Boston in the brig Jasper, of 236 tons burden, bound for the Mediterranean with a cargo of West Indian produce, and landed at Malta on the 2d of February.

[1] Appendix A

# CHAPTER V.

## EUROPE.

### 1832–33.

A WINTER voyage in a little trading-brig, in close quarters and living on pork and beans, seems to have been just what he needed in this "solstice of my health and spirits." Yet he did not like the sea-life: —

"A sea-voyage [he writes in his journal] at the best is yet such a bundle of perils and inconveniences that no person, as much a lover of the present moment as I am, would be swift to pay that price for any commodity which anything else could buy."

But henceforth the "pale train" of bodily ills that hitherto had dogged his footsteps seems in great measure shaken off. Here are some of his sea-notes: —

"Rose at sunrise, and, under the lee of the spencer, had a solitary, thoughtful hour. 'The clouds were touched, and in their silent faces might be read unalterable love.' They shone with light that shines on Europe, Afric, and the Nile, and I opened my spirit's ear to their most ancient hymn.

What, they said to me, goest thou forth so far to seek, — painted canvas, carved marble, renowned towns? But fresh from us, new evermore, is the creative efflux from whence these works spring. You now feel, in gazing at our fleecy arch of light, the motions that express themselves in arts. You get no nearer to the principle in Europe. It animates man. It is the America of America. It spans the ocean like a hand-breadth. It smiles at time and space. Yet welcome, young man! The universe is hospitable; the great God who is love hath made you aware of the forms and breeding of his wide house. We greet you well to the place of history, as you please to style it; to the mighty Lilliput or ant-hill of your genealogy; if, instructed as you have been, you must still be the dupe of shows, and count it much the three or four bubbles of foam that preceded your own on the sea of time. This strong-winged sea-gull and striped shearwater that you have watched as they skimmed the waves under our vault, — they are works of art better worth your enthusiasm, masterpieces of eternal power; strictly eternal, because now active, and ye need not go so far to seek what ye would not seek at all if it were not within you.

"All our prosperity, enterprise, temper, come and go with the fickle air. Now we are all awaiting a smoother sea to stand at our toilette. A head-wind makes grinning Esaus of us all. Yet I

must thank the sea and rough weather for a truckman's health and stomach, — how connected with celestial gifts!"

HARBOR OF MALTA, *February* 3, 1833.

Here in the precincts of St. John, the isle of old fame, under the high battlements, once of the Knights and now of England, I spend my Sunday, which shines with but little Sabbath light. *Tout commence*, it is hardly truer of me at this point of time, when I am setting foot on the Old World, and learning two languages, than it is of every day of mine, — so rude and unready am I sent into this world. I seem on all trivial occasions to be oppressed with a universal ignorance. If I rightly consider that, for this point of time which we call a life, *tout commence*, I shall rejoice in the omen of a boundless future, and not be chagrined. It is, however, a substantial satisfaction to benefit your companions with your knowledge, a pleasure denied me. Perhaps it is a pernicious mistake, yet, rightly seen, I believe it's sound philosophy, that wherever we go, whatever we do, self is the sole object we study and learn. Montaigne said himself was all he knew. Myself is much more than I know, and yet I know nothing else. The chemist experiments on his new salt by trying its affinity to all the various substances he can command, arbitrarily selected, and thereby discloses the most wonderful properties in his subject; and I bring

myself to sea, to Malta, to Italy, to find new affinities between me and my fellow-men; to observe narrowly the affections, weaknesses, surprises, hopes, doubts, which new sides of the panorama shall call forth in me. Mean, sneakingly mean, would be this philosophy, a reptile unworthy of the name, if *self* were used in the low sense; but I speak of the universal man, to whose colossal dimensions each particular bubble can, by its birthright, expand. Is it the hard condition upon which the love of highest truth is given, — such extreme incapacity for action and common conversation as to provoke the contempt of the by-stander, and even of kindred and debtors? Or is it that we will put off on our nature the bad consequence of our faults?

This is not in the vein of the picturesque tourist; of which indeed there was never much in Emerson. He looked about him in La Valetta, "from end to end a box of curiosities," admired the Church of St. John, and then crossed to Syracuse.

SYRACUSE, *February* 26, 1833.

DEAR WILLIAM, — As you so strongly urged my visit to Sicily, I cannot help taking a spare moment to date a letter to you from this oldest of towns. Here I have been dwelling now four days in the little peninsula of Ortygia; with Mt. Etna

visible from one window, the pillars of the Temple of Jove from another, and the Tomb of Archimedes and the Ear of Dionysius from the housetop. I have drank the waters of the fountain Arethusa; I have plucked the papyrus on the banks of the Anapus; I have visited the same catacombs which Cicero admired for the prodigious depth and extent of the excavations; I have heard mass said in the ancient Temple of Minerva, now converted into a cathedral. For my breakfast they give me most fragrant Hyblæan honey, and quails (in Ortygia) for dinner. Yet it is a poor, gray, shabby place, the ruin of ruins; the earthquakes have shaken down its temples, and there is scarce anything that speaks of Hiero, or Timoleon, or Dion. Yet I am glad to be where they have been, and to hear the bees, and pick beautiful wild flowers only three or four miles from the fountain Cyane. But my ignorance, as I supposed, is my perpetual tormentor. I want my Virgil and Ovid; I want my history and my Plutarch; I want maps and gazetteers. Were I fourteen days earlier here I would sit down in the Capuchin convent, and take my chance of begging or buying the right books. It is more Roman than Rome. It is the playground of the gods and goddesses, who went to Italy only in the progress of war and commerce.

*March* 5. Since I began my letter I have come by mule from Syracuse to Catania, and now by coach

between Etna and the shore hither. From Taormina to Messina, thirty miles, is the most picturesque country, I judge, that for the same extent is anywhere to be found. The towns are as the towns of goats, every one on a precipice; rich soil, stone villages, sunny sea-beach lined with fishermen drawing their nets; steep mountains of marble rising abruptly on the other side. Here am I in Messina, famous from Sparta downward, yet having now no antiquities to show, as Syracuse and Catania have, and no modern wonders of art, — only nature has been very kind to it. . . . But I suppose you would know how these out-courts of the Old World impress the poor hermit who, with saucer eyes, has strayed from his study. Why, *non so, c' è la medesima cosa*, same faces under new caps and jackets, another turn of the old kaleidoscope. Every place you enter is a new lottery: chance may make you acquainted with an honest and kind man therein, — then will that place disclose its best things; or you may know nobody, — then will go out of it ignorant and with disagreeable impressions.

From Messina he took steamboat for Palermo, passing betwixt Scylla and Charybdis; and from Palermo to Naples, where, at the Accademia, he marks "the contrast of the purity, the severity, expressed in these fine old heads with the frivolity and sensuality of the mob that exhibits and the

mob that gazes at them. These are the countenances of the first-born; the face of man in the morning of the world." But in general he seems most impressed with the fact that Italy is "only the same world of cakes and ale."

"On entering this bay [he writes in his journal at Naples], it is hard to keep one's judgment upright. Baiæ and Misenum and Vesuvius, Procida and Pausilippo and Villa Reale, sound so big that we are ready to surrender at discretion."

But he was not ready to surrender at discretion; his imagination and his heart were in Concord and Boston, and the sights and suggestions that unrolled themselves before his eyes in the fresh beauty of the Italian spring took no such hold upon him as to exclude "the vermin of *ciceroni* and *padroni*," and the other petty miseries that beset the traveller. The thoughts that really occupied him found expression in these verses in his journal:[1] —

. . . The all-wise God
Gilds a few points in every several life,
And as each flower upon the fresh hill-side,
And every colored petal of each flower,
Is sketched and dyed each with a new design,
Its spot of purple and its streak of brown,
So each man's life shall have its proper lights;
And a few joys, a few peculiar charms,
For him round in the melancholy hours,
And reunite him to the common days.

[1] *Collected Writings*, ix. 300.

Not many men see beauty in the fogs
Of close, low pine-woods in a river town;
Yet unto me not morn's magnificence,
Nor the red rainbow of a summer eve,
Nor Rome, nor joyful Paris, nor the halls
Of rich men blazing with hospitable light,
Nor wit, nor eloquence, — no, nor even the song
Of any woman that is now alive, —
Hath such a soul, such divine influence,
Such resurrection of the happy past,
As is to me when I behold the morn
Ope in such low moist road-side, and beneath
Peep the blue violets out of the black loam;
Pathetic, silent poets that sing to me
Thine elegy, sweet singer, sainted wife.

He wrote to his parishioner and friend, Mr. George Sampson: —

NAPLES, *March* 23, 1833.

MY DEAR FRIEND, — How go the days and the months with you and yours? How fares the soul under the wear and tear of vulgar events? What new thoughts? What brighter hope? I long to have a good talk with you, which the rolling moons may soon grant. I am so much indebted to your manly friendship, specially in the last year, that I miss my counsellor much, in this vast Babel too, where there is so much argument for conversation always occurring. Time, which brings roses, will bring us topics, I trust, less sombre than the old ones. I have regretted the vexation they gave you. It looks now to me as it always did. . . . I am

moving about here in much noise and myriads of people, and see much grandeur and much poverty, but I am not very sure that I grow much wiser or any better for my travels. We put very different matters into the scales, but the balance never varies much. An hour in Boston and an hour in Naples have about equal value to the same person. . . . Still, though travelling is a poor profession, bad food, it may be good medicine. It is good, like sea-sickness, to break up a morbid habit, and I sometimes fancy it is a very wholesome shaking for me. . . . I am glad to recognize the same man under a thousand masks, and hear the same commandment spoken to me in Italian I was wont to hear in English. . . . My greatest want is one that I apprehended when at home: that I never meet with men that are great or interesting. There are such everywhere, and here, no doubt, a just proportion; but a traveller, for the most part, never learns their names. That is why we ought not to travel too young. If you know the language, your chance of acquaintance is very much increased; if you are yourself great and good, why, I think your chance would be best of all. . . . When shall I find a letter from you? I have some letters from home, but they say not a word of the Second Church. Tell me of it, particularly. But chiefly tell me of yourself. I hope this finds your wife in health, and the little household of my nephews.

Remember me with much kindness to Mrs. Sampson, and so to all your friends and mine. Monday I am going to Rome, and there and everywhere am your affectionate, WALDO EMERSON.

TO MISS M. M. EMERSON.

ROME, *April* 18, 1833.

MY DEAR AUNT, — The sights and names of this wonderful town remind me much of my gifted correspondent, for the spiritual affinities transcend the limits of space, and a soul so Roman should have its honor here. How glad should I be of a letter to make the image livelier! . . . Did they tell you that I went away from home a wasted, peevish invalid? Well, I have been mending ever since, and am now in better health than I remember to have enjoyed since I was in college. How should one be sick at Rome? "Here is matter for all feeling," said Byron; and yet how evanescent and superficial is most of that emotion which names and places, which art or magnificence, can awaken! It yields in me to the interest the most ordinary companion inspires. I never get used to men. They always awaken expectations in me which they always disappoint, and I am a poor asteroid in the great system, subject to disturbances in my orbit, not only from all the planets, but from all their moons. The wise man, the true friend, the finished character, we seek everywhere, and only find in frag-

ments. Yet I cannot persuade myself that all the beautiful souls are fled out of the planet, or that always I shall be excluded from good company and yoked with green, dull, pitiful persons. After being cabined up, by sea and by land, since I left home, with various little people, all better, to be sure, and much wiser than I, but still such as did not help me, I cannot tell you how refreshing it was to fall in with two or three sensible persons with whom I could eat my bread and take my walk, and feel myself a freeman, once more, of God's universe. Yet were these last not instructors, and I want instructors. God's greatest gift is a teacher; and when will He send me one full of truth and of boundless benevolence and heroic sentiments? I can describe the man, and have, already, in prose and verse. I know the idea well, but where is its real blood-warm counterpart? I know, whilst I write this, that the creature is never to dawn upon me like a sun-burst; I know too well how slowly we edge along sideways to everything good and brilliant in our lives, and how casually and unobservedly we make all our most valued acquaintances. And yet I saw Ellen at once, in all her beauty; and she never disappointed me except in her death. And why may not the master which the soul anticipates so appear? You are so far off that I shall scarce get your answers very soon; so I may as well set down what our stern experience replies with the tongue

of all its days. "Son of man," it saith, "all giving and receiving is reciprocal; you entertain angels unawares, but they cannot impart more or higher things than you are in a state to receive. But every step of your progress affects the intercourse you hold with all others, elevates its tone, deepens its meaning, sanctifies its spirit; and when time and suffering and self-denial shall have transfigured and glorified this spotted self, you shall find your fellows also transformed, and their faces shall shine upon you with the light of wisdom and the beauty of holiness." You who cling with both hands to the literal Word and to venerable traditions will find in my complaints a confession and a self-accusation, no doubt. You will say I do not receive what Heaven gives. But you must not say any such thing. For I am, you see, speaking truly as to my Master. That excellent Teacher whom he sent, who has done so much to raise and comfort human life, and who prized sincerity more than sacrifice, cannot exist to me as he did to John. My brothers, my mother, my companions, must be much more to me in all respects of friendship than he can be. . . . Let me, dear aunt, find a letter from you in Paris, and believe me most affectionately your nephew, WALDO.

At Rome he went with docile mind to look at the famous views, the statues and the pictures, the

antiquities and the churches, and was always ready to admire what is admirable. One or two pictures remained in his memory, — Raphael's Transfiguration, Andrea Sacchi's Vision of St. Romuald; and some of the churches struck him, particularly St. Peter's. He was sorry, he said, to think that after a few days he should see it no more. Throughout his Italian journal the churches are prominent: St. John's at Malta is "a noble house to worship God in;" and of the churches in Sicily and at Naples he writes, "I yielded me joyfully to the religious impression of holy texts and fine paintings and this soothfast faith, though of women and children. Who can imagine the effect of a true and worthy form of worship in these godly piles? I do not mean the common Protestant service, but what it should be if all were actual worshippers. It would have something of this 'Catholic' ceremony, too; and yet not show a priest trotting hither and thither, and bowing now on this side and now on that. Why not devise ceremonies that shall be in as good and manly taste as their churches and pictures and music? How beautiful to have the church always open, so that every tired wayfaring man may come in and be soothed by all that art can suggest of a better world, when he is weary with this! I hope they will carve and paint and inscribe the walls of our churches in New England, before this century, which will probably see many grand

granite piles erected there, is closed. Have the men of America never entered these European churches, that they build such mean edifices at home? Art was born in Europe, and will not cross the ocean, I fear."

But he rarely sees anything that he had not expected, and he passes without notice where we might expect him to stop and admire. When we remember that the Coliseum and the Baths must have then been in much the same state as when Shelley saw them, fourteen years before, it seems strange that the sublime and lovely desolation Shelley describes in his letters should not have struck a poetical young American who had never seen a ruin or a laurestinus in his life. But he was upon another quest. "Ah, great Rome! It is a majestic city, and satisfied the craving imagination. And yet I would give all Rome for one man such as were fit to walk here, and could feel and impart the sentiment of the place. Yet I have found several pleasant and one valuable companion. I have found here, too, a friend of Carlyle in Edinburgh [M. Gustave d'Eichthal], who has given me a letter of introduction to him."

On the 23d of April he left Rome, and journeyed northward to Florence; admired the Duomo, "set down like an archangel's tent in the midst of the city," and Santa Croce, — or "the tombs with which it is floored and lined;" saw the far-famed

Venus and found her worthy of her fame; and dined and breakfasted with Mr. Landor, "who [he writes to his brother Charles] does not quite show the same calibre in conversation as in his books. It is a mean thing that literary men, philosophers, cannot work themselves clear of this ambition to appear men of the world. As if every dandy did not understand his business better than they. I hope better things of Carlyle, who has lashed the same folly."

From Florence he went by *vettura* with some American acquaintances through Bologna and Ferrara, and reached Venice on the first of June. The famous city, as he approached it by boat, "looked for some time like nothing but New York. It is a great oddity, a city for beavers, but, to my thought, a most disagreeable residence. You feel always in prison and solitary. It is as if you were always at sea. I soon had enough of it."

Thence to Milan, and over the Simplon to Geneva, — where, "to oblige my companions, and protesting all the way upon the unworthiness of his memory, I went to Ferney; to the *château*, the saloon, the bed-chamber, the garden, of Voltaire, the king of the scorners," — and reached Paris on the 20th of June.

Here his companions, "who have been in *la belle ville* before, and wished it to strike me as it ought, are scarce content with my qualified admiration. But I am not well pleased. I was sorry

to find that in leaving Italy I had left forever that air of antiquity and history which her towns possess, and in coming hither had come to a loud modern New York of a place. Yet it were very ungrateful in a stranger to be discontented with Paris, for it is the most hospitable of cities. The foreigner has only to present his passport at any public institution and the doors are thrown wide to him." He went to the Sorbonne, and heard Jouffroy, Thénard, Gay Lussac; to the Louvre and to the Jardin des Plantes: —

"How much finer things are in composition than alone! The universe is a more amazing puzzle than ever, as you glance along this bewildering series of animated forms; the upheaving principle of life everywhere incipient in the very rock, aping organized forms. Not a form so grotesque, so savage, or so beautiful but it is an expression of some property inherent in man the observer, — an occult relation between the very scorpions and man."

He saw Mme. Mars in "Delavigne's new piece, 'Les Enfans d'Edouard;' excellently performed. She scarcely excels the acting of the less famous persons who support her. Each was perfect in his part."

"*July* 4. Dined at Lourlier's with General Lafayette and nearly one hundred Americans. I sought an opportunity of paying my respects to the hero, inquiring after his health. His speech

was happy as usual. A certain Lieutenant —— did what he could to mar the day."

"It shall be writ in my memoirs (as aunt Mary would say) as it was writ of St. Pachomius: *Pes ejus ad saltandum non est commotus omni vita sua.* The worse for me in the gay city. Pray what brought you here, grave sir? the moving Boulevard seems to say."

PARIS, *June* 29, 1833.

DEAR WILLIAM: . . . For libraries and lectures, my own library has hitherto always been too large, and a lecture at the Sorbonne is far less useful to me than a lecture that I write myself. Then, for literary society and all that, — true, it would be inestimable if I could get at it. Probably in years it would avail me nothing. My own study is the best place for me, and there was always more fine society in my own little town than I could command. So, *Si le roi m'avoit donné Paris sa grand' ville, Je dirois au roi* Louis je préfère my inkstand.[1]

(Journal.) "How does everybody live on the outside of the world! All young persons thirst for a real existence, for an object, for something great and good which they shall do with all their heart. A man who was no courtier, but loved men, went to Rome, and there lived with boys. He came to

[1] This song, from Molière's *Misanthrope* (Acte I. Sc. ii.), Emerson said was the best poem in the French language.

France, and in Paris lives alone, and in Paris seldom speaks. If he do not see Carlyle in Edinburgh, he may go back to America without saying anything in earnest, except to Cranch and Landor."

Carlyle's articles in the English reviews had much impressed him, and a wish to see the writer of them had contributed much to shape his course towards Europe. He writes in his journal, the year before: —

"I am cheered and instructed by this paper on 'Corn Law Rhymes,' in the *Edinburgh*, by my Germanic new-light writer, whoever he be. He gives us confidence in our principles. He assures the truth-lover everywhere of sympathy. Blessed art that makes books, and so joins me to that stranger by this perfect railroad!"

Before leaving home he had learned the name of his unknown, and in Rome he received from Mr. D'Eichthal a letter of introduction to him, which he was expecting to deliver.

"*Sunday, July* 21. Arrived in London, and landed at the Tower Stairs. Took lodgings immediately at Mrs. Fowler's, 63 Russell Square. Went into St. Paul's, where service was saying. Poor church."

He stayed in London about three weeks; visited Coleridge, as he has related in "English Traits," and saw a few other persons, among them Dr.

Bowring, who took him to see Bentham's house, and made him remark that there were but two chairs in the apartment where he received his guests, as it was his invariable rule to receive but one at a time, — a rule which seemed to Emerson worthy of universal adoption by men of letters. Also John Stuart Mill, who gave him a card (which, however, he never delivered) introducing him to Carlyle.

LONDON, *July* 31, 1833.

DEAR WILLIAM: . . . I am sorry I did not write a good letter to Susan. I am afraid I tried too hard. Tell her to have patience with me, for when I was young I thought I wrote excellently, and I hope to have occasion to write to her many and many a time. . . . I have been to see Dr. Bowring, who was very courteous. He carried me to Bentham's house, and showed me with great veneration the garden-walk, the sitting-room, and the bed-chamber of the philosopher. He gave me also a lock of the gray hair and an autograph of the utilitarian. . . . I walked in the garden, on one side of which is the house where Milton lived when he was Cromwell's secretary.

At Edinburgh he did not find Carlyle, and had, says Mr. Alexander Ireland,[1] great difficulty in dis-

[1] *Ralph Waldo Emerson.* A Biographical Sketch. By Alexander Ireland. London, 1882 : p. 147.

covering his whereabouts, which he at length ascertained from the secretary at the University. He preached in Edinburgh, Mr. Ireland tells us, with great acceptance, at the Unitarian chapel; and a week later, having meantime made a little tour towards the Highlands, — spoiled by constant rain, "since the scenery of a shower-bath must always be much the same," — drove across from Dumfries to Craigenputtock, where Carlyle had been living for the last five years, and spent the afternoon and night there. He writes next day in his journal: —

"*Carlisle in Cumberland, August* 26. I am just arrived in merry Carlisle, from Dumfries. A white day in my years. I found the youth I sought in Scotland,— and good and wise and pleasant he seems to me, and his wife a most accomplished, agreeable woman. Truth and peace and faith dwell with them and beautify them. I never saw more amiableness than is in his countenance. T. C. has made up his mind to pay his taxes to William and Adelaide Guelf, with great cheerfulness, as long as William is able to compel the payment, and shall cease to do so the moment he ceases to compel them. T. C. prefers London to any other place to live in. John S. Mill the best mind he knows; more purity, more force; has worked himself clear from Benthamism. His only companion to speak to was the minister of Dunscore kirk. And he used to go sometimes to the kirk, and

envy the poor parishioners their good faith. But he seldom went, and the minister had grown suspicious of them and did not come to see him."

Carlyle was gratified at Emerson's coming so far to see him, and showed himself at his best. An affectionate regard sprung up at once between them which never ceased during their lives. The mutual attraction was no doubt to some extent the attraction of opposites. Neither cared much for the other's ideas; to each, indeed, the leading idea of the other, the message he wished to bear to his generation, was a delusion. Had they been required respectively to define by a single trait the farthest reach of folly in a theory of conduct, Carlyle would have selected the notion that mankind need only to be set free and led to think and act for themselves, and Emerson the doctrine that they need only to be well governed.

The divergence would not show itself at once, yet it must have been felt on both sides. But it never made much difference in their regard for each other. Each was well assured that the other at bottom wished for nothing else than truth and justice, and each felt that his friend had something which was lacking in himself. Emerson admired the abundance and superabundance of talent and personal force with which Carlyle could give effect to his views; and Carlyle, though he doubtless

looked upon Emerson as a well-meaning young Unitarian parson (a kind, he says, he had "long known, *intus et in cute*, and never got any good of them, or any ill"),[1] could not help enjoying the atmosphere of peace and serenity that Emerson diffused about him; nor, however he might despise the obstinate disposition to see nothing but "the divine effort" in every form of man, help loving the "enthusiast" who would always take him at his best.

"That man [Carlyle said to Lord Houghton] came to see me, I don't know what brought him, and we kept him one night, and then he left us. I saw him go up the hill; I did n't go with him to see him descend. I preferred to watch him mount and vanish like an angel."

To Emerson the interview was a happy one, and gratified the chief wish he had in coming to England; though he did not find all that he sought. He had been looking for a master; but in the deepest matters Carlyle, he found, had nothing to teach him. "My own feeling [he says in a letter to Mr. Ireland a few days afterwards] was that I had met with men of far less power who had got greater insight into religious truth." But he had come close to the affectionate nature and the nobility of soul that lay behind the cloud of whim and dys-

[1] *Thomas Carlyle: A History of the First Forty Years of his Life.* By J. A. Froude. New York, 1884: ii. 187.

pepsia, and he kept to that; and, for the rest, confined his expectations thenceforth to what Carlyle had to give. "The greatest power of Carlyle [he afterwards wrote], like that of Burke, seems to me to reside rather in the form. Neither of them is a poet, born to announce the will of the god, but each has a splendid rhetoric to clothe the truth."

On his way to Liverpool he stopped at Rydal Mount, and paid his respects to Wordsworth. "The poet [he writes in his journal] is ever young; this old man, whilst he recollected the sonnet he would recite, took the same attitude that he probably had at seventeen. His egotism was not at all displeasing, obtrusive, as I had heard. To be sure, it met no rock. I spoke, as I felt, with great respect of his genius."

Except this, I find nothing in the journals beyond what he has given in his account of the interview in "English Traits."

(Journal.) "*Liverpool*, *September* 1, 1833. I thank the great God who has led me through this European scene — this last school-room in which He has pleased to instruct me — in safety and pleasure, and has now brought me to the shore, and to the ship that steers westward. He has shown me the men I wished to see, Landor, Coleridge, Carlyle, Wordsworth; He has thereby comforted and confirmed me in my convictions. Many things I owe to the sight of these men. I shall judge more

justly, less timidly, of wise men forevermore. To be sure, not one of these is a mind of the very first class; but what the intercourse with each of them suggests is true of intercourse with better men, — that they never fill the ear, fill the mind; no, it is an idealized portrait which always we draw of them. Upon an intelligent man, wholly a stranger to their names, they would make in conversation no deep impression, — none of a world-filling fame. They would be remembered as sensible, well-read, earnest men; not more. Especially are they all deficient — all these four, in different degrees, but all deficient — in insight into religious truth. They have no idea of that species of moral truth which I call the first philosophy. The comfort of meeting men of genius such as these is that they talk sincerely. They feel themselves to be so rich that they are above the meanness of pretension to knowledge which they have not, and they frankly tell you what puzzles them. But Carlyle, Carlyle is so amiable that I love him. But I am very glad my travelling is done: a man not old feels himself too old to be a vagabond. The people at their work, the people whose vocations I interrupt by my letters of introduction, accuse me by their looks for leaving my business to hinder theirs. These men make you feel that fame is a conventional thing, and that man is a sadly 'limitary' spirit. You speak to them as to children, or persons of inferior

capacity, whom it is necessary to humor; adapting our tone and remarks to their known prejudices, and not to our knowledge of the truth. I believe in my heart it is better to admire too rashly, as I do, than to be admired too rashly, as the great men of this day are. They miss, by their premature canonization, a great deal of necessary knowledge, and one of these days must begin the world again (as to their surprise they will find needful) poor. I speak now in general, and not of these individuals."

At Liverpool there was a tedious delay of some days, the weather being too stormy to allow the sailing of the ship. Emerson sighed for Carlyle to help him pass away the time: "Ah me, Mr. Thomas Carlyle, I would give a gold pound for your wise company this gloomy evening." At the hotel he fell in with Jacob Perkins, the inventor, who enlightened him upon the science of heat. With him he went to the railroad and saw "Rocket and Goliath and Pluto and Firefly and the rest of that vulcanian generation. Mr. Perkins says they should not go faster than fifteen miles the hour; it racks the engine to go faster. He says that he confidently expects the time will come when the ocean will be navigated by merchantmen by *steam*, as the most economical means, but there is a great deal to be done first."

(At sea.) "*Sunday, September* 8, 1833. I wrote

above my conviction that the great men of England are singularly ignorant of religion. They should read Norton's preface to his new book,[1] who has stated that fact well. Carlyle almost grudges the poor peasant his Calvinism. Must I not admit in the same moment that I have practical difficulties myself? I see or believe in the wholesomeness of Calvinism for thousands and thousands; I would encourage, or rather I would not discourage, their scrupulous religious observances. I dare not speak lightly of usages I omit. And so, with this hollow obeisance to things I do not myself value, I go on, not pestering others with what I do [not] believe, and so I am open to the name of a very poor speculator, a faint, heartless supporter of a frigid and empty theism; a man of no vigor of manners, of no vigor of benevolence. Ah me! what hope of reform, what hope of communicating religious light to benighted Europe, if they who have what they call the light are so selfish and timid and cold, and their faith so unpractical, and, in their judgment, so unsuitable for the middling classes? I know not, I have no call to expound; but this is my charge, plain and clear, to act faithfully upon my own faith; to live by it myself, and see what a hearty obedience to it will do.

"I believe that the error of religionists lies in

[1] *Statement of Reasons for not Believing the Doctrines of Trinitarians.* By Andrews Norton. Cambridge, 1833.

this: that they do not know the extent, or the harmony, or the depth of their moral nature; that they are clinging to little positive verbal formal versions of the moral law, — and very imperfect versions too, — while the infinite laws, the great circling truths whose only adequate symbol is the material laws, the astronomy, etc., are all unobserved, and sneered at, when spoken of, as frigid and insufficient. I call Calvinism such an imperfect version of the moral law. Unitarianism is another, and every form of Christian and of Pagan faith in the hands of incapable teachers. On the contrary, in the hands of a true teacher, the falsehoods, the pitifulnesses, the sectarianisms of each are dropped, and the sublimity and depth of the original penetrated and exhibited to men. I say also that all that recommends each of these established systems of opinion to men is so much of this moral truth as is in them, and, by the instinctive selection of the preacher, is made to shine forth when the system is assailed. But the men of Europe will say, 'Expound: let us hear what it is that is to convince the faithful and at the same time the philosopher. Let us hear this new thing!' It is very old. It is the old revelation that perfect beauty is perfect goodness; it is the development of the wonderful congruities of the moral law of human nature. A man contains all that is needful to his government within himself. He is made a

law unto himself. All real good or evil that can befall him must be from himself. He only can do himself any good or any harm. Nothing can be given to him or taken from him, but always there 's a compensation. There is a correspondence between the human soul and everything that exists in the world; more properly, everything that is known to man. Instead of studying things without, the principles of them all may be penetrated unto within him. Every act puts the agent in a new condition. The purpose of life seems to be to acquaint man with himself. He is not to live to the future as described to him, but to live to the real future by living to the real present. The highest revelation is that God is in every man. Milton describes himself in his letter to Diodati as enamored of moral perfection. He did not love it more than I. That which I cannot yet declare has been my angel from childhood until now. It has separated me from men. It has watered my pillow. It has driven sleep from my bed. It has tortured me for my guilt. It has inspired me with hope. It cannot be defeated by my defeats. It cannot be questioned, though all the martyrs apostatize. It is always the glory that shall be revealed; it is the 'open secret' of the universe. And it is only the feebleness and dust of the observer that makes it future; the whole is now potentially at the bottom of his heart. Is it not a

sufficient reply to the red and angry worldling, coloring as he affirms his unbelief, to say, Think on living! I have to do no more than you with that question of another life. I believe in *this* life. I believe it continues. As long as I am here, I plainly read my duties as writ with pencil of fire. They speak not of death; they are woven of immortal thread.

"Men seem to be constitutionally believers and unbelievers. There is no bridge that can cross from a mind in one state to a mind in the other. All my opinions, affections, whimsies, are tinged with belief, — incline to that side. But I cannot give reasons to a person of a different persuasion that are at all adequate to the force of my conviction. Yet when I fail to find the reason, my faith is not less. Unpalatable must be always the argument based upon the text, 'If ye do my Father's will, ye shall know of the doctrine,' and almost incapable of being used in conversation. It is felt as a gross personality. Yet it is a good topic for the preacher, and a better topic for the closet."

## CHAPTER VI.

RETURN HOME. — THOUGHTS OF REFORM IN RELIGIOUS TEACHING. — DEATH OF HIS BROTHER EDWARD. — FIRST LECTURES. — SETTLES IN CONCORD.

1833–1836.

EMERSON sailed from Liverpool September 4th, arrived in New York October 9th, and soon afterwards rejoined his mother at Newton, near Boston, half a mile from the Upper Falls of Charles River, where she had been living during his absence; a pleasant farming country with scattered woodlands, where he renewed the solitary rambles he had learned to love at Canterbury. He at once returned to his preaching, and he began also to lecture.

TO MR. GEORGE A. SAMPSON, BOSTON.

Why have you not been out here to see the pines and the hermit? . . . It is calm as eternity, and will give you lively ideas of the same. These sleepy hollows, full of savins and cinquefoil, seem to utter a quiet satire at the ways and politics of men. I think the robin and finch the only philosophers. I listen attentively to all they say, and

account the whole spectacle of the day a new speech of God to me; though He speaks not less from the wharf and the market. Few men are listeners, but there are more there than here. I went to Waltham to-day, and preached to deaf and hearing; next Sunday I go to Watertown, and the following to Fall River; so you must come out here in the week; and 't is deep Sunday in this woodcocks' nest of ours from one end of the week to the other; times and seasons get lost here, sun and stars make all the difference of night and day. There is a walk through the woods of about two miles, which I will show you on the first occasion, from our house to the railroad.

(Journal.) "*Newton, October* 20. A Sabbath in the country, but not as odoriferous as I had imagined. Mr. ——, a plain, serious Calvinist, not winning, but not repelling; one of the useful police which God makes out of the ignorance and superstition of the youth of the world. I dare not and wish not to speak disrespectfully of these good, abstemious, laborious men, yet I could not help asking myself, How long is society to be taught in this dramatic or allegorical style? When is religious truth to be distinctly uttered? What it is, not what it resembles? Thus, every Sunday since they were born, the congregation have heard tell of salvation, and of going to the door of heaven and

knocking, and being answered from within: 'Depart, I never knew you.' What hinders that, instead of this parable, the naked fact be stated to them?—namely, that as long as they offend against their conscience they will seek to be happy, but they shall not be able; they shall not come to any true knowledge of God."

In some brief notes which he furnished for the account of his life in the "American Encyclopædia," Emerson speaks of a lecture which he delivered in January, 1834, before the Mechanics' Institute in Boston, as "his first attempt at a public discourse after leaving the pulpit." Yet it appears from his "Preaching Record," in which he set down the dates and places of all his sermons, that he preached at the Second Church in Boston on the second Sunday after his return home, and thereafter, as a rule, every Sunday in various places, four years longer. And as late as 1847 he was still preaching occasionally. It seems, therefore, that by "leaving the pulpit" he meant renouncing the claim to priestly authority. The office of minister was still attractive to him, had it been possible for him to fulfil the duties. And, to a certain extent, it was possible. He fully sympathized with the love of the Sunday service, and he was ready, as a layman, to read a sermon and to perform such other parts of the service as seemed to

him profitable, wherever he was asked to do so, until he could see his way to something more satisfactory.

He writes in his journal at this time: —

"A new audience, a new Sabbath, affords an opportunity of communicating thought and moral excitement that shall surpass all previous experience, that shall constitute an epoch, a revolution in the minds on whom you act, and in your own. The young preacher is discouraged by learning the motives that brought his great congregation to church. Scarcely ten came to hear his sermon, but singing, or a new pelisse, or cousin William, or the Sunday-school, or a proprietors' meeting after church, or the merest anility in Hanover Street were the beadles that brought and the bolts that held his silent assembly. Never mind how they came, my friend, never mind who or what brought them, — any more than you mind who or what set you down in Boston in 1835. Here they are, real men and women, — fools, I grant, but potentially divine, every one of them convertible."

Some years later (in 1841), when he had drifted farther away from churches, he says: —

"The church aerates my good neighbors, and serves them as a somewhat stricter and finer ablution than a clean shirt, or a bath, or a shampooing. When they have spent all their week in private and selfish action, the Sunday reminds them of a

need they have to stand again in social and public and ideal relations, beyond neighborhood, higher than the town-meeting, to their fellow-men. They marry; and the minister, who represents this high Public, celebrates the fact. Their child is baptized; and again they are published by his intervention. One of the family dies; he comes again, and the family go up to the church to be publicized or churched in this official sympathy of mankind. It is all good so far as it goes. It is homage to the ideal Church, which they have not; which the actual Church so foully misrepresents. But it is better so than nohow. These people have no fine arts, no literature, no great men to Boswellize, no fine speculation to entertain their family board or their solitary toil with. Their talk is of oxen and pigs and hay and corn and apples. Whatsoever liberal aspirations they at any time have, whatsoever spiritual experiences, have looked this way; and the Church is their fact for such things. It is still to them the accredited symbol of the religious idea. The Church is not to be defended against any spiritualist clamoring for its reform; but against such as say it is expedient to shut it up and have none, thus much may be said."

In 1833 he was more sanguine about a reform. In the sermon at the Second Church, soon after his return, — a discourse of affectionate greeting to his old congregation, and of hopefulness for the

future of religious instruction, — from the text "When the Spirit of truth is come, he will guide you into all truth," he says: —

"Before I parted from you I anxiously desired an opportunity of speaking to you upon the subject of that change which seems to be taking place under our eyes in the opinions of men on religious questions; of that teaching which all men are waiting for; of that Teacher who has been predicted, and hath not yet come. Who is that Teacher? Let Jesus answer. Even the Spirit of truth. He would say that there is a constant effort of the Divine Providence for the instruction of man. Time, the great teacher, is always uttering his lessons; every day is exposing some of the falsehoods that have deceived us; every day the Almighty Father accumulates knowledge in the mind of the race, from endless sources. The Teacher is one, but he speaks by a thousand thousand lips. To drop all personification, the progress of society, the simple occurrences of every day, are always instructing men, undeceiving them; and every event, big with what crimes and misfortunes soever, carries with it this beneficial effect. So with the highest truth, the relations, namely, of man to God, and the character of God. The perspective of time, as it sets everything in the right view, does the same by Christianity. We learn to look at it now as a part of the history of the world; to see how it rests on

the broad basis of man's moral nature, but is not itself that basis. I cannot but think that Jesus Christ will be better loved by not being adored. He has had an unnatural, an artificial place for ages in human opinions, a place too high for love. There is a recoil of the affections from all authority and force. In the barbarous state of society it was thought to add to the dignity of Christ to make him King, to make him God. . . . But will it not come to be thought the chief value of his teaching that it was a brave stand made for man's spiritual nature, against the sensualism, the forms, and the crimes of the age? The value of his particular lessons is something less to us than it was to his contemporaries, because, like every wise and efficient man, he spoke to his times, in all their singular peculiarities. He speaks as he thinks, but he is thinking for them. And it is the great mark of the extraordinary force of his mind that, notwithstanding this occasional character, his sayings have a fulness of meaning, a fitness to human nature, and an universality of application which has commended them to the whole world. Christianity is the most emphatic affirmation of spiritual nature. But it is not the only nor the last affirmation. There shall be a thousand more. Very inconsistent would it be with a soul so possessed with the love of the real and the unseen as Christ's to set bounds to that illimitable ocean. He never said: 'All

truth have I revealed.' He plainly affirms the direct contrary: 'I will send you another Teacher, another Comforter, even the Spirit of truth; he will guide you into all truth.' His word is a mustard-seed; it is a little leaven; but, with a prophet's eye, he sees it quicken in the minds of good men, and run, like something endued with life, from soul to soul, from land to land, — searching, agitating, educating society; touching with sympathy all heroic minds, and preparing hearts to conceive and tongues to utter yet more lofty and significant revelations. 'Greater things than these shall he do.' We see with our eyes the verification of his promise. In the place of the unsupported virtues of solitary individuals that sparkle in the darkness of antiquity, of the little stingy, rapacious intercourse of those days, the nations of the globe are brought together by pacific and equitable commerce; liberal, humane, Christian associations are correcting the manners and relieving the sufferings of vast masses of men: are they not all the fruit of the life and teachings of the lowly Nazarene? . . . There is a revolution of religious opinion taking effect around us, as it seems to me the greatest of all revolutions which have ever occurred; that, namely, which has separated the individual from the whole world, and made him demand a faith satisfactory to his own proper nature, whose full extent he now for the first time

contemplates. A little while ago men were supposed to be saved or lost as one race. Adam was the federal head, and his sin a federal sin, which cut off the hopes of all his posterity. The atoning blood of Christ again was a sacrifice for all, by which the divine vengeance was averted from you and me. But now . . . man begins to hear a voice that fills the heavens and the earth, saying that God is within him; that *there* is the celestial host. I find this amazing revelation of my immediate relation to God a solution to all the doubts that oppressed me. I recognize the distinction of the outer and the inner self; the double consciousness that, within this erring, passionate, mortal self, sits a supreme, calm, immortal mind, whose powers I do not know, but it is stronger than I; it is wiser than I; it never approved me in any wrong; I seek counsel of it in my doubts; I repair to it in my dangers; I pray to it in my undertakings. It seems to me the face which the Creator uncovers to his child. It is the perception of this depth in human nature, this infinitude belonging to every man that has been born, which has given new value to the habits of reflection and solitude. In this doctrine, as deeply felt by him, is the key by which the words that fell from Christ upon the character of God can alone be well and truly explained. 'The Father is in me: I am in the Father, yet the Father is greater than I.'

"I anticipate auspicious effects from the farther opening of this faith upon the public mind; from the studies and actings of good men in the course wherein its light will lead them. It will be inspiration to prophets and heroes. It will be day without night. In a particular manner will not the increased clearness of the spiritual sight produce a great reform in the tone and character of our public religious teaching? Will it not put an end to all that is technical, allegorical, parabolical, in it?"

He took no further steps at this time in the direction here indicated, — finding no distinct invitation.

BOSTON, *January* 18, 1834.

DEAR WILLIAM: . . . I have been writing three lectures on Natural History, and of course reading as much geology, chemistry, and physics as I could find. Meantime my ethics and theologics lie in abeyance; for you cannot preach to people unless they will hear. However, some of the faithful remain upon this portion of the earth, and by and by we may find a little chapel of the truth. I am just on the edge of another journey to New Bedford, where I may spend the month of February, having been overpersuaded by their kindness and zeal. If nobody wants us in the world, are we not excused from action, and may we not, blameless, use the philosophy which teaches that

by all events the individual is made wiser, and that this may be an ultimate object in the benevolence of the Creator?

He had been preaching for Dr. Orville Dewey in New Bedford, and it was intimated to him that he might receive a call to the pulpit which Dr. Dewey was then leaving; but he stipulated that he should not be expected to administer the Communion, nor to offer prayer unless he felt moved to do so, and to these terms the church could not agree. At New Bedford he lived among the Quakers, with whose faith he felt much sympathy. Among them he became acquainted with Miss Mary Rotch, whom he always remembered with high honor.

In this state of suspense his thoughts turned towards a retirement to some remote part of the country, perhaps Berkshire, where, in the dry air of the hills, he might provide a safe abode for Edward, who was manfully holding out in his West Indian exile, but looking always with an inextinguishable longing towards his distant home. Charles, too, was not disinclined towards such a scheme. The means for carrying it out were not wanting, for Waldo was now expecting to receive before long his wife's share of her father's property; enough, with what they could earn, to provide for their modest wants.

*December* 22, 1833.

DEAR EDWARD: . . . One of these days, if we may believe the lawyers, I am to be the richer for Ellen's estate; and, whenever that day arrives, I hope it will enable me to buy a hearth somewhere to which we pious Æneases may return with our household gods from all the quarters of our dispersion. . . . If you wish to know what I do, I preach at New Bedford, sometimes in Boston. I have written a lecture upon Natural History, and am now preparing another for next Tuesday evening, and have promised one to the Mechanics' Institute. I meditate something more seriously than ever before the adventure of a periodical paper, which shall speak truth without fear or favor to all who desire to hear it, with such persuasion as shall compel them to speak it also. Henry Hedge is an unfolding man, who has just now written the best pieces that have appeared in the *Examiner*; one especially was a living, leaping Logos, and he may help me.

Charles and I went to Concord a few days ago. He delivered a fine lecture upon Socrates. But Charles looks often despondent, and finds his fate as hard as yours. Indeed, that properly belongs to the race man, rather than to any individual. How come on the adventures? I was sorry to hear of any disappointments. Pray rein

in that sanguine genius of yours, that risks and projects so magnificently, and which I can well remember from Latin School and Andover upward, and make him trot tame and safe for a year or two; for nothing is so important as your health, to which the anxieties of indebtedness will never contribute. We can get used to being poor, for the first men and happiest men of the earth have been so, but we can't away with pain and disease; and whatever loss you suffer by following this bad advice set down to my account, and it shall be cheerfully and affectionately honored by your brother, WALDO.

NEWTON, *May* 31, 1834.

Here sit mother and I among the pine-trees, still almost as we shall lie by and by under them. Here we sit, always learning and never coming to the knowledge of. The greatest part of my virtue — that mustard-seedlet that no man wots of — is hope. I am ever of good cheer, and, if the heaven asks no service at my hands, am reconciled to my insignificance, yet keeping my eye open upon the brave and the beautiful. Philosophy affirms that the outward world is only phenomenal, and the whole concern of dinners, of tailors, of gigs, of balls, whereof men make such account, an intricate dream, the exhalation of the present state of the soul, wherein the Understanding works incessantly

as if it were real, but the eternal Reason, when now and then he is allowed to speak, declares it is an accident, a smoke, nowise related to his permanent attributes. Now that I have used the words, let me ask you, Do you draw the distinction of Milton, Coleridge, and the Germans between Reason and Understanding? I think it a philosophy itself, and, like all truth, very practical. Reason is the highest faculty of the soul, what we mean often by the soul itself: it never *reasons*, never proves; it simply perceives, it is vision. The Understanding toils all the time, compares, contrives, adds, argues; near-sighted but strong-sighted, dwelling in the present, the expedient, the customary. . . . But glad should I be to hold academical questions with you here at Newton. The Tucker estate is so far settled that I am made sure of an income of about twelve hundred dollars, wherewith the Reason of mother and you and I might defy the Understanding, upon his own ground, for the rest of the few years in which we shall be subject to his insults. I need not say that what I speak in play I speak in earnest. If you will come, we will retreat into Berkshire, and make a little world of other stuff. Your brother, WALDO.

In a fragment of a letter, the last he ever wrote, Edward thanks him for his "splendid offer," but says it is "too luxurious, too full of the air of Eden,

to be soberly embraced as a commonplace arrangement by one who has ever pierced his hands in each attempt to grasp a rose. Nevertheless, next year, when I come to you, we will talk over what then remains unvanished of the project."

Before the next year came the tidings of Edward's death (October 1, 1834). Edward Bliss Emerson was a much more brilliant man than Waldo; strikingly handsome, with "an indignant eloquence" (says one who remembers him), ambitious in a high sort. Full of talent and personal force, a favorite in society, he seemed born for a leader of men, but was ill seconded by his body, in which the family tendency to chest-disease had been aggravated past the reach of cure by the circumstances of his life and the strain of an eager temperament that would not let him rest. To some of their contemporaries, as to Dr. Hedge (see above, p. 138), the promise of the elder brother seemed faint in comparison with that of the younger, and there are those who think that, but for his untimely eclipse, Edward would have made the name of Emerson more famous than it is. Yet, when a friend alluded to the sensation that some of his college dissertations produced, Edward said, "Yes, they say much of me, but I tell them that the real lion of the tribe of Judah is at home." He always deferred to Waldo's judgment in literary matters, and took his counsel about his college papers. He was

prepared to enter college at thirteen, but submitted without a murmur when money considerations interfered to induce delay. The next year, obstinate "colds" and weakness of the eyes forced him to break off and sail in a coasting vessel for the South, where he passed the winter. Returning in the summer (1820), he entered Harvard College, where from the outset he was easily first, first without any second in college rank; making an impression that is still remembered. Like the rest of the brothers, he kept school during the college vacations and after he graduated, and in this capacity also is remembered as of unapproached excellence.[1] At the same time he was admitted, upon Mr. Webster's certificate, as a student at the Suffolk bar;[2] but was obliged by the state of his health to take a voyage to the Mediterranean, and spent a year in Europe. Upon his return he entered Mr. Webster's office in Boston, and soon won a confidential position. Mr. Webster entrusted him with the care of his children during the absence of their parents from home, saying that he did so without anxiety, for Emerson could take better care of them than he could. Besides his law-studies he took four boys as pupils, "to employ his leisure

[1] Dr. D. G. Haskins, *Reminiscences*, p. 38.

[2] Professor James B. Thayer informs me that ordinarily no certificate of studentship was required. Perhaps the variety of Edward Emerson's employments might make it needful or convenient in his case to fix the time when his law-studies began.

hours;" was "reading three hours a day to William H. Prescott;" and "glad to get a job of cataloguing books for the Boston Athenæum."

At such a rate of consumption and with so scanty supply, the oil of life could not hold out. But his high spirit would admit no relaxation so long as the debts occasioned by his European journey remained unpaid. "Every well day [he writes to Waldo in 1827] carries me nearer to the point where I hope to find the file that, industriously used, is to separate these fetters of debt, and leave the limbs free." He would not "go any deeper in that dead and bitter sea of debt that drowns so many vigorous swimmers." He lost the confident gaiety of demeanor that was natural to him, and fell into a melancholy and a morbid conscientiousness, ending in illness and then suddenly in violent insanity, from which he recovered, indeed, in a few months, but with broken health, and with the feeling that he must thenceforth stand aside from the busy pathways of life, and content himself in bearing his burden with as little infliction of it upon others as might be. In 1830 he went to the island of St. Croix, and thence to Porto Rico, where he obtained a clerkship with slender pay, and remained until his death: in appearance, as he was seen by travelling friends, tranquil and even gay; affording hopes for his final restoration to health, but well aware himself, as he said, that "the arrow of the angel had gone too deep."

"So falls [writes Waldo] one pile more of hope for this life. I am bereaved of a part of myself." They were nearest in age and in the range of their intellectual sympathies, and the difference of temperament only increased their mutual attraction. Since their boyhood they had seen but little of each other, but now that they were to meet no more the sense of solitude struck the survivor as if they had never been separated.

Emerson's first lectures were upon subjects connected with natural science. Dr. Holmes says of him that "he looked rather askance at science in his early days." It is true that he did not love analysis, and so was unfitted to be an investigator; yet his note-books show a good deal of reading in books of science. He quotes from De Candolle and Sprengel, Cuvier and Sir Everard Home, and has pages of citations from books on chemistry and meteorology. In November, 1833, a few weeks after his return from Europe, he delivered the introductory lecture in a course given under the direction of the Boston Society of Natural History. In December of the same year he read a paper on the "Relation of Man to the Globe;" in January, 1834, he lectured before the Mechanics' Institute in Boston on "Water;" and in May he delivered the annual address at the meeting of the Natural History Society.

In the first of these papers, "On the Uses of Natural History," he adverts to his recent visit to the Museum of the Jardin des Plantes at considerable length, describing particular specimens and dwelling upon the interest that is given to them by seeing them together, in the discovery of occult relations to ourselves: —

"It is in my judgment the greatest office of natural science (and one which as yet is only begun to be discharged) to explain man to himself. The knowledge of all the facts, of all the laws of nature, will give man his true place in the system of being."

This was a familiar thought with Emerson. In a sermon at the Second Church he said that the Copernican astronomy, in dispelling the boastful dreams of theologians, which had made this planet the sole theatre of God's moral government, had rendered an immense service to religion. Our conceptions of man and his destiny receive an infinite enlargement by being connected with a universal scheme of being.

He knew something of Lamarck's speculations, and the phrase "arrested development" had struck his attention. In the lecture "On the Relation of Man to the Globe," he speaks of the fact, "the most surprising, I may say the most sublime, that man is no upstart in the creation, but has been prophesied in nature for a thousand thousand ages be-

fore he appeared; that, from times incalculably remote, there has been a progressive preparation for him, an effort to produce him; the meaner creatures containing the elements of his structure and pointing at it from every side. . . . His limbs are only a more exquisite organization — say rather the finish — of the rudimental forms that have been already sweeping the sea and creeping in the mud: the brother of his hand is even now cleaving the Arctic Sea in the fin of the whale, and innumerable ages since was pawing the marsh in the flipper of the saurian."

In the address before the Natural History Society, he says: "There is deep reason for the love of nature that has characterized the highest minds. The soul and the body of things are harmonized; therefore the deeper a man's insight into the spiritual laws, the more intense will be his love of the works of nature. But it is said that man is the only object of interest to man. I fully believe it. I believe that the constitution of man is the centre from which all our speculations depart. But it is the wonderful charm of external nature that man stands in a central connection with it all; not an individual in the kingdom of organized life but sends out a ray of relation to him."

Emerson looked at nature as a poet and not as a man of science, yet he was not unmindful of the advantage that belongs to science, of presenting

definite objects of study, things finished off and complete, instead of the infinite objects of sentiment. "They are perfect creatures. In nature nothing is false or unsuccessful. That which is aimed at is attained. A willow or an apple is a perfect being; so is a bee or a thrush. The best poem or statue or picture is not." Hence "the discipline of natural science is that it sharpens the discrimination. It teaches the difficult art of distinguishing between the similar and the same. The whole study of nature is perpetual division and subdivision, and these distinctions are real. All properties are permanent. Natural objects are so sharply discriminated, and any mistake in practice is so promptly exposed, that it is to be desired that so many dull understandings, who make no distinctions, should be set to making chemical mixtures or classifying plants. What pity, instead of that equal and identical praise which enters into all biographies and spreads poppies over all, that writers of characters cannot be forced to describe men so that they shall be known apart; even if it were copied from the sharp marks of botany; such as, dry, solitary, sour, plausible, prosing; which were worth a graveyard of obituaries." And it might restrain our national vice of imitation; for "imitation is a servile copying of what is capricious, as if it were permanent forms of nature. All American manners, language, and writing are de-

rivative. We do not write from facts, but we wish to state facts after the English manner. It is the tax we pay for the splendid inheritance of the English literature. We are exonerated by the sea and the Revolution from the national debt, but we pay this, which is rather the worse part. Time will certainly cure us, probably through the prevalence of a bad party, ignorant of all literature and of all but selfish gross pursuits. But a better cure would be in the study of natural history; for the study of things leads us back to truth. But as books can never teach the use of books, neither does science, when it becomes technical, keep its own place in the mind. Men are so prone to mistake the means for the end that even natural history has its pedants, who mistake classification for science; who forget that classification is but a convenience for the collection of facts awaiting the discovery of the law. He only can derive all the advantage from intimate knowledge who forces the magnified objects back into their true perspective; who, after he has searched the proximate atoms, integrates them again, as in nature they are integrated. It seems the duty of the naturalist to be a poet in his severest analysis; rather I should say, to make the naturalist subordinate to the man. It is for want of this marriage of mind to nature that both remain unfruitful. The poet loses himself in imaginations, and, for want of accuracy, is

a mere fabulist. The *savant*, on the other hand, losing sight of the end of his inquiries in the perfection of his manipulations, becomes an apothecary, a pedant. I fully believe in both, in the poetry and in the dissection. Accuracy, then, that we may really know something; but under the guidance of the pious sentiment of curiosity to understand ourselves and the whole."

The idea upon which he dwells in "Nature," and to which he recurred in some of his latest lectures (on the "Natural History of the Intellect"), — that the external world is an answer in hieroglyphics to the questions the mind would put concerning itself, — is indicated in these early papers. In the address to the Boston Society of Natural History, he says: "A thorough knowledge of the mineral and the plant would continually disclose its relation to man, and explain some corresponding secret in man; so that every plant in its little year would be prophet, physician, astronomer, moralist, to us." The lecture on the "Uses of Natural History" concludes with the question: "Whether the most mysterious and wonderful fact, after our own existence, be not the power of expression which belongs to external nature; or that correspondence of the outward to the inward world of thought and emotions, by which it is suited to express what we think?"[1]

This winter (1834) he gave also two lectures on

[1] For further accounts of these and other lectures see Appendix F.

Italy, in which he recounted the incidents of his tour very simply from his journal, for the benefit of his untravelled townsmen.

In the summer he was chosen poet for the annual meeting of the Phi Beta Kappa Society in Cambridge. Some of the verses, giving a portrait of Mr. Webster as he then appeared to Emerson, are published in the Appendix to the "Poems" in the Riverside edition.[1]

He had not yet given up the thought of a retirement from the haunts of men. He wrote to Dr. Hedge (July 12th) from Bangor, Maine, where he was preaching: —

"I am almost persuaded to sit down on the banks of this pleasant stream, and, if I could only persuade a small number of persons to join my colony, we would have a settlement thirty miles up the river, at once."

But in October he and his mother, at Dr. Ripley's invitation, went to live in the Manse at Concord. Here their wanderings came to an end; for here, as it turned out, Emerson was to fix his residence. There was much to recommend this place: here his forefathers had lived, and his earliest associations with the country went back to visits with his brothers at the Concord Manse, and their strolls over Dr. Ripley's hill and Peter's field and the

[1] *Collected Writings*, ix. 312.

woods of Sleepy Hollow beyond. Then Charles was to marry a Concord lady, Miss Elizabeth Hoar, and had decided to begin the practice of the law here.

They lived in the Manse a year, until, in the winter of 1835, Emerson became engaged to Miss Lydia[1] Jackson, of Plymouth, and it was necessary for him to look out for a house of his own. Writing to William in April he says: —

"I hope to hire a house and set up a fireside next September. Perhaps Charles also; and, a year hence, shall we not build a house on grandfather's hill, facing Wachusett, Monadnoc, and the setting sun?"

This hillside, opposite the Manse, and the field beyond, variously called Peter's field or Cæsar's woods, from ancient tillers of it, liberated negro slaves, whose cabins had stood there, were favorite resorts of Emerson and his brothers. In one of his journals he describes the view: —

"*Sunday evening.* I went at sundown to the top of Dr. Ripley's hill, and renewed my vows to the genius of that place. Somewhat of awe, somewhat grand and solemn, mingles with the beauty that shines afar around. In the west, where the sun was sinking behind clouds, one pit of splendor lay as in a desert of space, — a deposit of still

[1] Changed, at Emerson's desire, to Lidian, as uniting better in sound with the new surname.

light, not radiant. Then I beheld the river like God's love journeying out of the gray past into the green future."

But an opportunity occurred that made it prudent for him to choose a less favored spot: —

"*July* 27, 1835. Has Charles told you that I have dodged the doom of building, and have bought the Coolidge house in Concord, with the expectation of entering it next September? It is in a mean place, and cannot be fine until trees and flowers give it a character of its own. But we shall crowd so many books and papers, and, if possible, wise friends into it, that it shall have as much wit as it can carry. My house costs me thirty-five hundred dollars, and may next summer cost four or five hundred more to enlarge or finish. The seller alleges that it cost him seventy-eight hundred."

This house was Emerson's home for the rest of his life. The situation was not all that could be desired: the house stands rather low, upon ground sloping to a meadow through which a brook flows on to Concord River, with no extensive outlook except on the east, towards the Lincoln hills. Still, upon the whole, it suited him very well. Without being too remote, it was on the outskirts of the village, and gave him plenty of open ground about him, which was an important consideration. Speaking somewhere of a reformer[1] who objected

[1] One of the founders of the short-lived community of Fruit-

to cows that they require so much land, he says: "But a cow does not need so much land as my eyes require between me and my neighbor." Here was a wide expanse on three sides, and ample space in front next the road. In the rear, a pathway led across the brook through open fields to Walden and the Cliff, his favorite walks. Then the house, a square, comely mansion, after the pattern often seen on the main street of the older New England villages, was of a size and style beyond what he would have thought fit to build for himself.

"Being a lover of solitude, I went to live in the country, seventeen miles from Boston, and there the northwest wind, with all his snows, took me in charge and defended me from all company in winter, and the hills and sand-banks that intervened between me and the city kept guard in summer."

In the early part of the year (1835), while still at the Manse, he gave in Boston five biographical lectures, on Michelangelo, Luther, Milton, George Fox, and Burke, with an introduction on the Tests of Great Men. One of these tests, he says, is good-humor. Sweet-tempered ability is the mark of heroic manners. Napoleon worked gloomily, alone; Luther, La Fayette, Alfred, Shakspeare, in

lands, in the town of Harvard. They would have no cows, — We do not, they said, stimulate with milk; but their ploughman, liking a cup of milk, hired cows instead of oxen for the ploughing.

broad daylight, with red cheeks. Julius Cæsar had good-humored ambition; Bonaparte was narrow and jealous. Then, unselfish enthusiasm. Even such a devastator as Attila, esteeming himself God's Scourge, opened into himself supernal influence. He did not insist on the sweetness of Michelangelo or of Milton. They were absolved, like Dante, by the loftiness of their genius. But in Luther and in George Fox human kindness was a main source of power. It was the union of a broad humanity and common sense and warm social affections with the extraordinary intensity of his convictions that saved Luther from the extravagances of fanaticism.

The papers of Michelangelo and Milton he rather reluctantly allowed Dr. Palfrey, the editor of the *North American Review*, to publish, in 1837 and 1838.

In August on this year he made the opening address at the American Institute of Education, in Boston. The subject was "The best mode of inspiring a correct taste in English literature." The Reverend Dr. Hague[1] says that Emerson "commenced his address with a brilliant paragraph containing a parenthetic affirmation of the uselessness of prayer!" There is nothing of the kind in the manuscript, and I can only suppose that Emerson,

[1] *Ralph Waldo Emerson.* A paper read before the New York Genealogical and Biographical Society. New York, 1884: p. 5.

contrary to his wont, improvised the exordium of his discourse. But whatever he may have said, he can hardly have intended anything so unqualified. "As well [he said] might a child live without its mother's milk as a soul without prayer." It was doubtless meant to be restricted to public or vicarious praying; which, Emerson thought, was apt to fall into something extremely different.

I will take this occasion to advert to another passage in Dr. Hague's too brief reminiscences, in which he quotes from Emerson's essay on the "Sovereignty of Ethics" to show that Emerson, looking back upon his life after the lapse of nearly half a century, recognized the moral and social disintegration which his teaching had wrought. But that essay, although first published in 1878, was made up from earlier writings. Most of it, including the substance of the passage in question, belongs to the lectures on the "Present Age," delivered in 1839–40; and there are similar passages in his Cambridge note-books, ten years earlier. They all express what he felt at all times of his life, the attractiveness that belongs to the ages of unquestioning faith; but he was thinking of the seventeenth century, not of the nineteenth or the eighteenth, and what he felt was an imaginative sympathy, without any wish to go back to them.

To return to the address: the leading thought was that since all the colleges in the world cannot

make one scholar, any more than the physician can make one drop of blood, those who are to supervise education must not expect much from ingenious methods or urgent appeals, but should aim to awaken in those under their charge the sense of their own powers and their particular vocation, and, in the way of instruction, acquaint them with the wealth of their mother-tongue, as the best means for calling out their capacities, whatever these may be. The first step towards a revolution in our state of society, he says, would be to impress men's minds with the fact that the purest pleasures of life are at hand, unknown to them; that whilst all manner of miserable books swarm like flies, the fathers of counsel and of heroism, Shakspeare, Bacon, Milton, and Taylor, lie neglected. And as no man can teach more than he knows, or inspire a taste which he has not, the instructor must first fill himself with these, to the exclusion of the crowd of mediocre writers. Books are like the stars in the sky, which seem innumerable, but begin to count them and they diminish apace. As to methods, would you inspire in a young man a taste for Chaucer and Bacon? Quote them to him. Let him judge of the writer, not as a fault-finder, but by the delight which is the proper attendant of great sentiments. Accustom the pupil to a solitude, not of place, but of thought. Wean him from the traditionary judgments; save him wholly

from that barren season of discipline which young men spend with the Aikens and Ketts and Drakes and Blairs; acquiring the false doctrine that there is something arbitrary or conventional in letters, something else in style than the transparent medium through which we should see new and good thoughts.

"Another want that literature feels in this country is that of companionship. If something like the union of like-minded men were attempted, as formerly at Wills' or Button's coffee-houses, or in the back room of the bookseller's shop, where the scholar might meet scholars without passing the picquet and guard-posts of etiquette, it would add happy hours to the year."

Though Emerson was a new resident in Concord, he had made the acquaintance of the Concord people long since, at the Manse or with Dr. Ripley in his chaise upon his rounds of parish calls; and it was not as a stranger, but as a townsman, that he was called upon in September for a discourse on the second centennial anniversary of the incorporation of the town.[1] Some of the minute-men of Concord Fight sat by his side on the platform. He prepared himself by diligent reading of the printed sources of information, spending a fortnight at Cambridge for this purpose, and studied the town

[1] *Collected Writings,* xi. 31.

records in the crabbed manuscript; besides visiting, in company with Dr. Ripley, some of the survivors of the skirmish at the bridge, in order to collect their reminiscences. He also drew some interesting particulars from the diaries of his grandfather, William Emerson.

Two days after the address he drove to Plymouth, and was married. A lady, then a little girl, who accompanied him as far as Boston on his drive, remembers that the stable-keeper, no doubt in honor of the bridal journey, had furnished him for the occasion with a pair of new reins of yellow webbing. Emerson, noticing them, stopped at the stable and had them changed. "Why, child, the Pilgrims of old Plymouth will think we have stopped by the wayside and gathered golden-rods to weave the reins with." The marriage took place at the Winslow house, a well-preserved colonial mansion belonging to Miss Jackson, who had proposed that they should live there. But he could not leave Concord. "I must win you [he writes to her during their engagement] to love it. I am born a poet,—of a low class without doubt, yet a poet. That is my nature and vocation. My singing, be sure, is very husky, and is for the most part in prose. Still I am a poet in the sense of a perceiver and dear lover of the harmonies that are in the soul and in matter, and specially of the correspondences between these and those. A sun-

set, a forest, a snow-storm, a certain river-view, are more to me than many friends, and do ordinarily divide my day with my books. Wherever I go, therefore, I guard and study my rambling propensities. . . . Now Concord is only one of a hundred towns in which I could find these necessary objects, but Plymouth, I fear, is not one. Plymouth is streets." As if there were no woods or sunsets in Plymouth! But the attractions of Concord were too strong. In Concord, accordingly, they set up housekeeping; Emerson got his study arranged, and settled down to the manner of life from which he never afterwards departed. There was a small flower-garden already laid out, in which Mrs. Emerson established her favorite plants from Plymouth; and there was also a vegetable-garden, where Emerson began his husbandry, leaving his study to do a little work there every day. While thus engaged one day in the following spring, one of his townsmen came to warn him that a stray pig was doing mischief in the neighboring grounds. He then learned that he had been appointed one of the hog-reeves for the year, according to the town custom, which pointed out newly married men as particularly eligible for that office.

In November he undertook to supply the pulpit at East Lexington, near Concord, and usually preached there for the next three years. In the winter (1835–36), by invitation of the Society for the

Diffusion of Useful Knowledge, he gave at the Masonic Temple in Boston a course of ten lectures on English Literature; or rather, as he put it, "On Topics connected with English Literature:" the first of those courses which afterwards, in some memories, lent an air of dignity to that somewhat grotesque edifice. Availing himself of the largeness of the announcement, he made the lectures the vehicle of the matter he had most at heart.

Literature, he says in his introduction, is the record of the rise, progress, and prevalence of ideas. These invisible natures make every man what he is. His whole action and endeavor in the world is to utter them, in various ways, of which the most perfect is language. It is the nature, not of any particular man, but of man, to think. Standing at the point between spirit and matter, and native of both elements, he knows that the one represents the other. But human history and our own lives lie too close to us. Custom makes us regard our relations to objects as immovably fixed. The thinker takes us apart from them, and shows us the passage ot things and events as a spectacle, a series of figures in which the whole of spiritual nature is successively illustrated. Poets, orators, and philosophers have been those who could most sharply see and most happily present emblems, parables, in the objects which nature puts before the senses. Seeing everything as it rightly is, re-

lated to the whole and partaking its perfection, the poet discovers to us the beauty that is concealed beneath the every-day aspect of things; and the utterance of his thought to men proves his faith that all men can receive them, that all men are poets, though in a less degree.

In the succeeding lectures he treats of the origin of the English people and the permanent traits of the national genius. After some specimens of the Welsh and the Anglo-Saxon poetry and some remarks on the Age of Fable, he takes, as illustrative figures, Chaucer, Shakspeare, Lord Bacon, Ben Jonson, Herrick, George Herbert, Sir Henry Wotton; then the ethical writers, exemplified by Milton, Lord Clarendon, and Dr. Johnson. He closes with a lecture on the literature of the day (with the exclusion of living writers), — Byron, Scott, Coleridge, Dugald Stewart, Sir James Mackintosh. Byron's chief value is that of a rhetorician; Coleridge is a critic rather than a poet. Emerson's judgment of Scott anticipates by a year or two that of Carlyle. Scott, he says, is the most lovable of men, and entitled to the world's gratitude for the entertainment he has given to solitude, the relief to headache and heart-ache; but he is not sufficiently alive to ideas to be a great man. Strong sense he has, humor, fancy, humanity; but of imagination, in the high sense, little or nothing. Lear, Hamlet, Richard,

are sublime from themselves; Ravenswood and Meg Merrilies only from situation and costume. Jeanie Deans and Balfour of Burley certainly have an interest from character also; but it is not very deep, and we do not remember anything they say. Burns, Campbell, and Moore, the favorites of Emerson's boyhood, are passed over. In the introduction and in the concluding pages there is much that was printed soon afterwards in "Nature."

The course made a marked impression, and secured Emerson's welcome as a lecturer thenceforth. For a survey of English literature it was obviously inadequate, but Emerson's hearers soon discovered that the announced subject had but little to do with the matter; and the lovers of good literature were consoled by the copious extracts with which the lectures were interspersed. The peculiar charm of Emerson's reading was now made known to a larger circle. One of his hearers of that time told me that she still remembered and associated with Emerson's voice and manner some verses of Crabbe which she then heard for the first time; very likely other writers not mentioned in the manuscript were introduced.

In the early part of 1836 Emerson furnished the copy and a preface for the publication (set on foot by Dr. Le Baron Russell) of Carlyle's "Sartor Resartus" as a book by itself, and before the end of the year was able to announce to Carlyle the sale

of the whole edition. Another edition of above a thousand copies was sold before it was collected in England.

Emerson was not among the enthusiasts for "Sartor" when it first appeared here; his preface, some of them thought, was timid and superfluously apologetic; and when I tried, long afterwards, to recall to him the stir the book made in the minds of some of the younger men, he hesitated, and said he supposed he had got all that earlier, from Coleridge. He was in full sympathy with the ideas, but the "masquerade" under which they were presented was so displeasing to him as to make him doubtful how it would be received if reprinted here. "O Carlyle! [he writes in his diary] the merit of glass is not to be seen, but to be seen through; but every crystal and lamina of the Carlyle glass shows."

He remonstrates with him upon his "defying diction" in the letter[1] which begins the correspondence which lasted throughout their working lives, always sustained, in spite of their dissimilarities of temperament, by a steady good-will and a personal attachment on both sides. "My affection for that man [Emerson writes in his journal] really incapacitates me from reading his book. The pages which

[1] May 14, 1834. *The Correspondence of Thomas Carlyle and Ralph Waldo Emerson.* [Edited by Professor Charles Eliot Norton. Boston, 1883: i. 11.

to others look so rich and alluring, to me have a frigid and marrowless air for the warm hand and heart I have an estate in, and the living eye of which I can almost discern across the sea some sparkles. In the windy night, in the sordid day, out of banks and bargains and disagreeable business [connected with the reprinting of Carlyle's books], I espy you, and run to my pleasant thoughts."

And Carlyle, on his side, many years afterwards (in 1875), when their correspondence had ceased, writing to Emerson's daughter, Mrs. Forbes, to assure her that her father's letters should be sent to her, says: —

"I wish you had told me something about your father's health and procedures in these his years of rest, but I always vaguely hear from time to time that he still keeps his health tolerably; and of his constant friendship to me, and the kind of silent but sacred covenant that exists between us two to the end, and has at all times been so precious to me, I never have any questioning."

It was doubtless fortunate that Carlyle never came to America, as Emerson hoped he would, for upon a close approach the antagonism of their natures might have asserted itself too strongly. Even at a distance it sometimes made itself felt, especially at the time of our civil war. "How can I write to you? [Emerson says in a fragment of

a letter, perhaps never sent.] Your mood is not mine, and you choose to sit like Destiny at the door of nations and predict calamity, and contradict your *morale*, and with irresistible wit and ridicule shatter the attempts of little men at charity and humanity, and uphold the offender. But strength is strength, and comes always from God, and so is at base divine and to issues divine."

And in the rough draft of a letter in 1870 he speaks for "a multitude of good men, your friends, who love and fear you, and believe that the Heaven which inspired you gave you a keener perception of the faults than of the good-wills of men, both east and west. . . . I think of you as carrying a trumpet confided to you by some of the elder angels, to signify by its blasts in Fontarabian echoes that an empire and a republic are to fall. Well, your eloquent warning voice will do no harm. The evils you stigmatize are real and poisonous enough, but not the less the balance has been, is, and will be kept. In this country we are greedy of gain as others, and with manifold more opportunities and avenues than others."

Deep as was the divergence, there was a deeper region in which, as Carlyle said, they came together. In spite of some hasty expressions on either side, it is certain, I think, that there was never any estrangement; to the last Emerson spoke of Carlyle with affection, and to the last it was fully returned.

## CHAPTER VII.

### TRANSCENDENTALISM.

In a letter to Carlyle (March 12, 1835),[1] Emerson speaks of a journal, to be called *The Transcendentalist*, which "some young men" are proposing to issue. One of those young men, who, in the tranquil vision of age, has not forgotten the dreams of his youth, the Reverend Dr. Frederic Henry Hedge, has most kindly furnished me with an account of the scheme as it shaped itself at a somewhat later period: —

"In September, 1836, on the day of the celebration of the second centennial anniversary of Harvard College, Mr. Emerson, George Ripley, and myself, with one other, chanced to confer together on the state of current opinion in theology and philosophy, which we agreed in thinking very unsatisfactory. Could anything be done in the way of protest and introduction of deeper and broader views? What precisely we wanted it would have been difficult for either of us to state. What we strongly felt was dissatisfaction with the reigning sensuous philosophy, dating from Locke, on which

[1] *Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence*, i. 48.

our Unitarian theology was based. The writings of Coleridge, recently edited by Marsh, and some of Carlyle's earlier essays, especially the 'Characteristics' and the 'Signs of the Times,' had created a ferment in the minds of some of the young clergy of that day. There was a promise in the air of a new era of intellectual life. We four concluded to call a few like-minded seekers together on the following week. Some dozen of us met in Boston, at the house, I believe, of Mr. Ripley. Among them I recall the names of Orestes Brownson (not yet turned Romanist), Cyrus Bartol, Theodore Parker, and Wheeler and Bartlett, tutors in Harvard College. There was some discussion, but no conclusion reached, on the question whether it were best to start a new journal as the organ of our views, or to work through those already existing. The next meeting, in the same month, was held by invitation of Emerson, at his house in Concord. A large number assembled; besides some of those who met in Boston, I remember Mr. Alcott, John S. Dwight, Ephraim Peabody, Dr. Convers Francis, Mrs. Sarah Ripley, Miss Elizabeth Peabody, Margaret Fuller, Caleb Stetson, James Freeman Clarke. These were the earliest of a series of meetings held from time to time, as occasion prompted, for seven or eight years. Jones Very was one of those who occasionally attended; H. D. Thoreau another. There was no

club, properly speaking; no organization, no presiding officer, no vote ever taken. How the name 'Transcendental,' given to these gatherings and the set of persons who took part in them, originated, I cannot say. It certainly was never assumed by the persons so called. I suppose I was the only one who had any first-hand acquaintance with the German transcendental philosophy, at the start. The *Dial* was the product of the movement, and in some sort its organ."

Earlier than this, in June, 1835, I find in Emerson's journal the beginning of an attempt to expound the "First Philosophy;" that is, he says, the original laws of the mind, the science of what is, in distinction from what appears.

"They resemble great circles in astronomy; each of which, in what direction soever it be drawn, contains the whole sphere. These laws are ideas of Reason; they astonish the Understanding, and seem to it gleams of a world in which we do not live. Our compound nature differences us from God, but our reason is not to be distinguished from the Divine Essence. To call it ours seems an impertinence, so absolute and unconfined is it. The best we can say of God we mean of the mind as it is known to us. Time and space are below its sphere; it considers things according to more intimate properties; it beholds their essence, wherein is seen what they can produce. It is in all men,

even the worst, and constitutes them men. In bad men it is dormant, in the good efficient; but it is perfect and identical in all, underneath the peculiarities, the vices, and the errors of the individual. Compared with the self-existence of the laws of truth and right, of which he is conscious, his personality is a parasitic, deciduous atom. The Understanding is the executive faculty, the hand of the mind. It mediates between the soul and inert matter. It works in time and space, and therefore successively. The ideas of Reason assume a new appearance as they descend into the Understanding; they walk in masquerade. Reason, seeing in objects their remote effects, affirms the effect as the permanent character. The Understanding, listening to Reason on one side, which saith, It is, and to the senses on their side, which say, It is not, takes middle ground, and declares, It will be. Heaven is the projection of the ideas of Reason on the plane of the Understanding. The Understanding accepts the oracle, but, with its short sight not apprehending the truth, declares that in futurity it is so, and adds all manner of fables of its own. What a benefit if a rule could be given whereby the mind, dreaming amidst the gross fogs of matter, could at any moment *east* itself and find the sun! But the common life is an endless succession of phantasms, and long after we have dreamed ourselves recovered and sound, light

breaks in upon us, and we find we have yet had no sane hour. Another morn rises on mid-noon."

He did not proceed far with the attempt to write out in plain prose the fundamentals of Transcendentalism. They are to be felt as sentiments, religious emotions, or grasped by the imagination in poetic wholes, rather than set down in propositions. For himself, at any rate, a freer mode of speech was needed. This he attempted in "Nature."

In September, 1833, a day or two after he sailed from Liverpool, Emerson writes in his journal: "I like my book about nature, and I wish I knew where and how I ought to live. God will show me." The book about nature was no doubt in its main lines the first part of the little volume published three years later under that title: "the first clear manifesto," says Mr. Norton, "of Emerson's genius;" and the first document, we may say, of that remarkable outburst of Romanticism on Puritan ground, "the Transcendental movement."

The Boston or New England Transcendentalism had, as Dr. Hedge says, no very direct connection with the transcendental philosophy of Germany, the philosophy of Kant and his successors. Kant's distinction of the transcendental ideas, — the ideas of Reason, whose objects are God, the soul, and nature as a whole, — from the finite conceptions of the Understanding, was eagerly caught up, mostly

through Coleridge, by young and ardent persons in this country, especially among the younger Unitarian ministers, because it fell in with their own assurance of a more direct and intimate mode of access to things unseen and eternal than was admitted by the prevailing Nominalism. They did not pay much regard to Kant's warning that these ideas, though of the highest value for the regulation of conduct, do not constitute knowledge, since we have no means of testing their correctness. The transcendental consciousness was its own evidence, and needed no verification. The transcendental was whatever lay beyond the stock notions and traditional beliefs to which adherence was expected because they were generally accepted by sensible persons. Some of the neophytes made perhaps a little too much parade of the transcendental consciousness, and society took its revenge by the nickname Transcendentalists, applied without much discrimination to all who pretended to look beyond the boundaries of established opinion and practice. The occasional meetings of a changing body of liberal thinkers, agreeing in nothing but their liberality, received from the public the name of the Transcendental club; though, says Dr. James Freeman Clarke, one of the original members, they called themselves "the club of the like-minded; I suppose because no two of us thought alike." Or rather, we may say, because, in spite of all differ-

ences of opinion, they were united by a common impatience of routine thinking.

There was little attention among them to the German or to any systematic metaphysics, yet there was, I think, a coincidence with what is perhaps deepest in Kant: at least, Kant's intimations concerning the Practical Reason, as an impulse constantly urging us to enlarge the conceptions of the Understanding, appear to agree well enough with Emerson's definition of Transcendentalism as "the feeling of the Infinite;" and his statement ("Nature," p. 59) of the problem of philosophy, "for all that exists conditionally to find a ground unconditioned and absolute," referred by him to Plato, seems to belong rather to Kant. However this may be, it was the feeling that the world is nowhere "nailed up with boards," but open on all sides, if we will but open our eyes, — an intolerance of authority and convention, and not any definite opinions they had in common, — that brought the Transcendentalists together.

Mere agreement in dissent, however, in a community where the penalties of dissent were upon the whole so light, would not have been sufficient of itself to develop so much heat of sympathy and enthusiasm. Something more was at work: but when we try to come closer to the secret of Transcendentalism we are met on all sides by the assertion that it was faith in intuitions; the claim of a

direct discernment of the true, the beautiful, and the right, in place of the slow and circuitous process of inductive reasoning. This was the charge brought against the new heresy, and it could be abundantly supported from the writings of the chief heresiarch. "Revere your intuitions;" "To the involuntary perceptions a perfect faith is due:" in such phrases Emerson abounds.

If this were all, if the claim was that our feeling that a proposition is true is sufficient proof of its truth, the answer would be easy; so easy that the unwearied demonstrations from that time to this of the insufficiency of unverified intuitions, and the absurdity of setting up our own opinions and sentiments as the standards of truth or of right, would seem to be superfluous. Reliance on intuitions in this sense would mean self-conceit, or at the best an exaggerated regard for one's own spiritual experiences. There was no doubt a good deal of both among the Transcendentalists, for they were innovators, and this circumstance naturally attracted a good deal of their attention to themselves. But Transcendentalism was too considerable a fact to be disposed of by reducing it to egotism or sentimentalism. Applied to Emerson, the most prominent figure among the Transcendentalists, such a description, every one will feel, would be preposterous. Nothing was more foreign to him than idolatry of his opinions or his moods. Cate-

gorical as he often is in his statements, there never was a man more free from the distemper incident, he says, "to eminent spiritualists, the incapacity of putting their act or word aloof from them, and seeing it bravely for the nothing it is."[1]

Intuition, with him, means something very different from infallible knowledge; it means, to use his own words, the openness of the human mind to new influx of light and power from the Divine Mind. His reverence for intuitions and his distrust of reasoning were only the preference of truth over our past apprehension of truth. Reasoning, in the sense in which he contrasted it with intuition, is the application of a rule taken from past experience, the drawing of a circle with a given radius. But such is the convenience of a rule that we are apt to imagine that it adds something to the experience on which it is founded. We shut ourselves up in creeds, in scientific formulas, in general maxims which we have found sufficient; in short, we draw a circle, and then assume that because no other can be drawn with that radius, no other can be drawn. We stop thinking, and then appeal to reason to justify us.

Reverence for intuitions meant to Emerson resistance to the sleep that is apt to come over our spiritual faculties, making us insensible to the unfailing intimations that nothing in this world is

[1] "Conduct of Life." *Collected Writings*, vi. 129.

final; that all conclusions are provisional, all ends momentary; that the best must be superseded by a better. The health of the soul, he thought, consists in obedience, unobstructed reception. Beyond this he did not attempt to go in the way of doctrine. The *positive* conditions of our reception of the Divine Spirit (for it is hardly enough to say that it is involuntary) he did not undertake to state. Such a statement would have been a philosophy; but Transcendentalism was not a philosophy; it was a religious revival, "a wave of sentiment," Mr. Frothingham happily calls it,[1] such as from time to time had stirred the rigid surface of Puritan thought with a hint of smothered fires.

In order to trace the history of transcendentalism in New England it would be needful to look back to the very beginnings of the colony, and to note the various outbursts of religious enthusiasm overflowing the boundaries of accredited doctrine, in Antinomianism, Anabaptism, Quakerism; and in the revival of a more fervent spirit in Calvinism by Whitefield and the "new lights," who worried Dr. Chauncy and his Arminian brethren in the middle of the eighteenth century by their pretensions to an immediate knowledge of divine truth, "not upon reason and evidence, but through a secret impulse in the soul,"—very much as the

[1] *Transcendentalism in New England.* By Octavius Brooks Frothingham. New York, 1876: p. 355.

new lights a century later worried the Unitarian leaders by their appeals to consciousness and the sacredness of intuitions. In all these cases the heresy was the more intolerable because what was claimed was not so much the discovery of new truths as a livelier apprehension of the old; a pretension which could not be summarily set aside, since it was after all a characteristic of Protestantism, nay of Christianity, which in its beginnings had always appealed to the witness of the Spirit in the breast of the individual believer, against all official reason and evidence. Especially Unitarianism (or Liberal Christianity, as some of its eminent supporters preferred to call it) was justified, if it was justified at all, in its rejection of the fundamental dogma of the Church, by the superior authority of conscience and common sense in the interpretation of Scripture.

The earlier transcendentalisms in New England had been stifled or reduced to inoffensive proportions by the nature of the situation, which allowed no discussion of fundamentals. The Whitefield revival, on the other hand, was a reaction; the expiring effort of a spirit that was well-nigh spent, and could only create a ripple on the surface of the stream that was steadily bearing down towards a new order of things.

To the devout Puritan the earth was "the scaffold of the divine vengeance;" all enjoyment and

success were adjourned to another world; the chief business of this was to take to heart our inherent worthlessness and the worthlessness of all earthly things. This was his theodicy; his justification of the ways of God to man; the only hypothesis upon which he could reconcile his faith with the actual state of society. To the comfortable New England citizen of the later time the earth presented no such aspect: men had run to and fro, and knowledge was increased, and wealth; there was outward security and unexampled prosperity; society was settled upon a rational basis, readily admitting improvement; the arts of life connected the little community with the rest of the civilized world; and with all this the stern Puritan concentration upon another state of existence was fast disappearing. In those in whom it still survived, like Mary Moody Emerson, it was, as she partly felt, an anachronism. To the well-to-do Boston merchant or professional man this world was a very good place; and it would have been mere affectation in him to pretend to realize to his own mind the ancestral formulas of wrath and denunciation. They had faded out into symbols; still venerable from association, but no longer expressing his real feelings. And with them the forms of worship in which they had been expressed had lost their high significance. Religion was becoming more and more the affair of Sundays or of particular occasions; it

was no longer the idealism of every day and of all day; and the efforts of pious men to supply, through logical proof to the understanding, what was wanting in reality and self-evidence to the feelings, could only hasten the process. The profound mysticism of the Calvinistic theology gave place to rationalistic ways of thought, to Arminianism, to Unitarianism, and in these shapes could no longer retain the fervor of the ancient faith.

What was more important than any change of opinions was the changed attitude of mind towards the whole subject of religion. The other world was losing its reality, — so much was clear; and it was a symptom of tremendous importance. No wonder if to a devout mind it seemed that the very foundations of society were giving way. There was, no doubt, some exaggeration in speaking, as the committee of the First Church did, of the alarming attacks of the Learned and the Witty upon our holy religion. The attitude of the learned and the witty — that is, of the more instructed and refined part of the community — towards religion was not one of hostility, but rather that of kindly and respectful indifference. If, like Franklin, they had been so placed as to feel at liberty to do exactly as they pleased, many of them, no doubt, like him, would have "seldom attended any publick worship;" but, like him, they would have had "an

opinion of its propriety and of its utility when rightly conducted." But what they called public worship was dictated rather by a regard for decorum than by religious feeling. They would have been indignant had they been told that they were living without God in the world; but they had not been taught to think of God as actually present in *this* world, or to think of whatever is essentially admirable, admirable for its own sake, as the witness of his presence. Such language they would have thought very well in the pulpit, but out of place and suspicious elsewhere. There was no object of *worship* in their lives; nothing the supreme veneration of which was its own sufficient recompense, as the love of God had been to their fathers. The Puritan earnestness had not died out; the sense of responsibility was as lively as ever; but the objects towards which it turned, however excellent or indispensable, had no obvious religious significance. To earn one's living by honest labor; to be pure, upright, charitable; to be a good son, father, citizen, — these things were essential to the well-being of society, and to that of the individual as part of it; but they awakened no enthusiasm, gave no scope for self-devotion, since the end in view, however desirable, came short of the ultimate and total welfare of the individual; it was after all something that he might conceivably renounce. To claim for it the sanction of religion would have

been felt as a confusion and a profanation. That religion should be "the means merely of social, political, or any earthly good" seemed to Miss Mary Emerson "as if the lover should use a symbol of his friend to ordinary purposes." This, she admits, "looks like holy nonsense;" yet it is good sense on the assumption that religion is concerned only with our relations to another world, and has nothing to do with this. If God be the inhabitant of another sphere, omnipotent, of course, omnipresent in power, but not actually intervening here except upon special occasions and through miraculous agencies, then whatever gives importance to the things of this world may be suspicious. Even piety and beneficence, says M. M. E., endear life; might they not be snares to our feet?

But this view was the outgrowth of convictions that were now past, though their influence still continued. The relegation of the objects of devotion to another world was the expedient of a sublime unwavering conviction that would not let its ideals go, but could find no place for them on earth. There was no loss of faith in the fading-out of this other-worldliness in the dawn of the conviction that there *is* place for them; that the heavenly life does not require us to leave the earth nor to refuse ourselves to its concerns, but only to take care that they do not imprison us in petty satisfactions and momentary ends; to find in them, as Emerson said,

outlets and occasions worthy of the faculties we spend upon them. Such was the beatific vision that hovered in dim poetic distance before the eyes of the Transcendentalists, and found expression in "Nature."

The first part of the essay appears to have been for some time in hand. This, I conjecture, may comprise the first five chapters. The seventh and eighth chapters (Spirit) seem to have been written after his removal to Concord; the sixth, Idealism, last of all, as the connection of the two. He writes to his brother William: —

CONCORD, *June* 28, 1836.

My little book is nearly done. Its title is "Nature." Its contents will not exceed in bulk Sampson Reed's "Growth of the Mind." My design is to follow it by another essay, "Spirit," and the two shall make a decent volume.

*August* 8. The book of "Nature" still lies on the table. There is as always one crack in it, not easy to be soldered or welded; but if this week I should be left alone, I may finish it.

In the latter part of the month he was correcting the proof-sheets, and it was published in September. In the first edition was prefixed this motto from Plotinus: —

"Nature is but an image or imitation of wisdom, the last thing of the soul: Nature being a thing which doth only do, but not know."

Nature, or the existing world, is the realization of the Divine Mind in time and space; the effect of the universal cause. Considered in itself, or as finality, it is opaque, brute, unspiritual. So looked at, nature means fate, the power of circumstance, the bondage of the spirit. Man regarded as part of nature is the victim of his environment; of race, temperament, sex, climate, organization. But man is not simply a part of nature, not mere effect, but, potentially, shares the cause. His mind is open on one side to the Divine Mind, and, in virtue of that communication, he may detach himself from nature, and behold the world of facts aloof and as it were afloat. To thought and inspired will nature is transparent and plastic. Man, when he thinks, is placed at the centre of beings, where a ray of relation passes from every other being to him; every natural fact is seen as the symbol of a spiritual fact, the expression of a thought that does not stop there, but goes on endlessly to embody itself in higher and higher forms. When he submits his will to the divine inspiration, he becomes a creator in the finite. If he is disobedient, if he would be something of himself, he finds all things hostile and incomprehensible. As a man is, so he sees and so he does. When we persist in disobedience, the inward ruin is reflected in the world about us. When we yield to the remedial force of spirit, then evil is no more seen.

"Build, therefore," he concludes, "your own world. As fast as you conform your life to the pure idea in your mind, that will unfold its grand proportions. A correspondent revolution in things will attend the influx of the spirit."

To Emerson this meant that our lives, so far as they go beyond animal existence, are made what they are by our ideals, our growing consciousness of the public, universal functions which are shared by all things, but by brutes and inanimate creatures unconsciously, and therefore without the power to interfere either to check or to extend them. All things are moral, that is, endlessly serviceable; the prerogative of man is to feel this infinity within him, and make himself its willing instrument. So far as he is obedient to the heavenly vision he sees it realized about him, even in things called evil; for he sees that the disagreeable appearances, the dislocation and failure in his own fortunes or in the world about him, only reflect his want of faith in the eternal beneficent necessity that is always bringing things right, through the ruin of whatever is opposed to it.

The little book did not attract many readers; only a few hundred copies were sold, and it was twelve years before a new edition was called for. Mr. Frothingham says it was violently attacked upon its first appearance; by the representatives, I suppose, of orthodox opinion. By the *Christian*

*Examiner*, the chief organ of the Unitarians, it was treated rather indulgently, as a poetical rhapsody, containing much beautiful writing and not devoid of sound philosophy, but, on the whole, producing the impression of a disordered dream. Transcendentalism was attacked (though more often sneered at) as a threat, however impotent, of radical revolution; but not often, I think, in the person of Emerson. In him, it would be felt, revolution was like the revolutions of Nature, who does not cast off her old leaves until she has got ready the new. Dr. Holmes, in the exquisite eulogy before the Massachusetts Historical Society at the meeting after Emerson's death, says of him that he was "an iconoclast without a hammer, who took down our idols from their pedestals so tenderly that it seemed like an act of worship." That is well said; but I am not sure that he took them down, or even thought it important that they should come down, so long as they were really objects of worship. What he wished to disturb was formalism; the stagnation of the spiritual life about the emblems of a faith that has departed; the gazing after past revelations until we are blind to the present.

But some there were, high-flying souls filled with the new wine of this idealism, to whom the reality of ideas appeared to require that immediate effect should be given to their ideas; and, failing

this, that they should refuse all participation in an order of things which they could not approve. This antinomian spirit in various degrees very much abounded at that time, and it was to this that the name of Transcendentalism was commonly given. In minds of a practical turn it took the shape of associations for radical reform, even to the extent of separation from the stockish civilization of the community into select societies of their own. Others, of less turn for practice or more exorbitant ideas, seeing that all association involves some descent and accommodation to the average view, were disposed to renounce society and its works altogether, and to betake themselves to the companionship of the rocks and trees, of animals, or of children and uneducated persons; in whom there is no consciousness of any aim beyond the present, and therefore no danger of their disgusting us by paltry aims.

The name that most readily suggests itself here is that of Thoreau; but he stands somewhat apart, upon a ground of his own, as a writer of unequalled gift for conveying unbroken the peculiar charm of the homely New England landscape. He had the right to saunter at will in the fields and woods of Concord, though he need not have spent so much time there, still less have exalted sauntering into a religion. In general the recusants were persons of delicate susceptibility, who banished themselves to

the rocks and echoes, not so much from any keen satisfaction they found there as by way of rebuke to the shortcomings of civilization. "They praise the farmer's life," writes Emerson in his journal, "but it is only to express their sense of some wrong in the merchant's; praise the farmer's a little more and you shall find they do not like it."

A good instance, of which I find some trace among Emerson's papers, was that of two city lads, — merchants' clerks or apprentices, — who, a year or two before Thoreau's Walden hermitage, forsook their counting-rooms and spent the most of a winter in the forest, far from human habitation, cooped up in their hut, reading and writing (in mittens) as well as they could for the cold, and at length escaped, with severe frost-bites, to the settlements, whence they could seek the assistance of their friends.

This was the exaggeration of a disposition widely spread among the educated youth of this neighborhood at that time, — a spirit of revolt against commonplace surroundings; against employments, companionships and standards they could not accept without some compromise with their genius, some condescension from the lofty tasks and the high friendships of which they felt themselves capable. It was a frame of mind that is common enough, no doubt, at all times and places during the critical period of "getting under weigh," but it was

especially favored by the circumstances. The New England or the America of that day was yet more emphatically than the present the land of promise. Everything was beginning, the bonds of tradition were loosed, new prospects were opening on every side. An intoxication was in the air, from which the most conservative were not exempt. There was an immense, indefinite hope, and there was the assurance that all particular mischiefs were speedily coming to an end.

The exhilaration was not confined to this country; in England, Coleridge, Shelley, and Wordsworth were the prophets of a world of better stuff, and Byron gave the counterpart in his bitter mockery of the present. Even in conservative Oxford there was a "movement," though to be sure it was in a retrograde direction. "Everybody was to rise. All were to retrace their steps to an age of which they knew nothing, except that it was in every respect the very contrary of that we live in." [1] It was the farthest wave of Romanticism, starting half a century back in Germany and France, and reaching our shores in 1835. But here the resistance of the environment was far less, "the cure by hunger," of which Carlyle speaks in "Sartor Resartus," less operative; the past and the present in all ways had much less force, the future much greater. So the

[1] *Rev. T. Mozley's Reminiscences, chiefly of Oriel College and the Oxford Movement.* Boston, 1882: ii. 2.

Transcendental *aura* expanded widely, and also harmlessly; for in the directions in which it might have done harm it was met by the resistance, potent as ever, of the Puritan spirit, and went off in talk. There was much talk in those days of spontaneity, — the right and the duty of acting one's self out, and following one's genius whithersoever it might lead; but when it came to action, the Puritan blood held its own, and refused to flow in unlawful channels. The worst that could be said of Transcendentalism was that it led to a good deal of vaporing, of rhetoric and paradox, spoken and acted, — confident statements, strong expressions, not always of serious conviction so much as of an overweening superiority to every-day opinions and practices, too lofty to condescend to any appreciation of them. People complained that Transcendentalism unfitted their sons for business and their daughters for society, without making them fit for anything else.

It was easy to turn the "Transcendental movement" into ridicule, — there were, indeed, among the Transcendentalists some who saved their ill-wishers the trouble, — but, soberly considered, it was no bad thing to find, still alive, something of the idealism that had made New England. Had the scoffers been better gifted with an instinct for what is vital to the welfare of the community, they might have felt, behind the extravagances, the presence of

something to give them pause; a striving towards the realization of the glittering generalities of the Declaration of Independence. If it be asked, What was the good of Transcendentalism? I would suggest by way of reply that it was a sentiment; and that as such its influence for good, if it had any, is to be looked for in a deeper way of feeling and an enlarged way of thinking about all subjects, and not in a particular set of opinions or practices. Whether any such results can be traced it is perhaps even now too soon to inquire. Anyhow, it was an interesting phase of the New England character, and the more remarkable the closer it is looked at.

# CHAPTER VIII.

## CONCORD.

THE new household that Emerson was setting up in the quiet town of his forefathers was to include his mother and also his brother Charles, whose marriage to Miss Elizabeth Hoar was to take place in September; and Waldo was engaged in adding rooms to the house for their accommodation, when the pleasant prospect was shut out by Charles's death.

The "pallid brow" and the "slight figure" that characterize Charles Emerson in Dr. Holmes's beautiful lines were premonitory of the pulmonary weakness by which the trio of brothers were afflicted; and now, as the thirtieth year approached, there were symptoms that made it advisable for him in the spring to seek a milder climate. Waldo, who was lecturing in Salem, and had left the charge of the house to Charles, postponed his lectures, and went southward with him by easy stages to New York, where his mother was.

SOUTH BROOKFIELD, *April* 23, 1836.

DEAR LIDIAN: . . . I am particularly sorry to

leave you alone at this time, when so many things are to be considered and done; sorry too because wifey is sorry; sorry because Charles, who knows better what I want than I do, is gone at the same time; sorriest for the occasion of absence. But all these sorrows I hope may end pleasantly soon. I hate journeying. It is for me very unprofitable time. The conversation of the stage-coach I dislike also. On almost all occasions it is waste breath, both what I hear and what I say. You will think me so nice and with so few things pleased that I am not fit to live. But I find my compensation in the heartiness of my joy when I do find my hour and my man.

*April* 24. Yesterday's winter wind has disappeared, but we have a raw, chill day, hostile to life. I fear I shall not feel any love for my fatherland until Charles's cough is relieved. He is not seriously ill, otherwise than that he has a very delicate system, with very little power of resistance. . . . Inform me accurately by mail at New Haven, and then immediately at New York, of your health, circumstances, doings, and thinkings, my dear wife. I hope neither of my guests, Col. Kent or Mr. Kettell, will come whilst I am gone. If they should, open wide all doors; tell them they are heartily welcome, and that I left word they must entertain themselves; and then do you feel no responsibility at all. You said you gave Mrs. Samp-

son the hospitable glance. Well, do even so by them all. And so farewell and happily, my kind wife, and time and the Lord of time shall bring roses and sunshine for even you and me.

Yours affectionately, WALDO E.

At New York Charles seemed better, and Waldo left him there, for the time, with his mother, at William's house, and went back to his lectures, from which he was speedily summoned by the news of a sudden aggravation of the malady, and hurried back, with Miss Hoar, too late to find his brother living.

NEW YORK, *Thursday, May* 12, 1836.

DEAR LIDIAN, — Yesterday afternoon we attended Charles's funeral. Mother and Elizabeth heard the prayers, but did not go out. Mother is very well, and bears her sorrow like one made to bear it and to comfort others. Elizabeth is well, and the strength and truth of her character appear under this bitter calamity. William and Susan are well and thoroughly kind to us, as they have been tenderly faithful to Charles. I have told mother that I think it best, on every account, she should return immediately with me, and end her painful visit to New York, whither she came to spend a month of happiness in the new household of her son. It has been seven or eight months of much sickness, anxiety, and death. She will return with me and

Elizabeth, and we take the boat to-morrow afternoon. Now, my dear wife, shall I find you in Boston or in Concord? Do what you think best. You may think it necessary to go home on Friday, to make ready and receive us, or perhaps you can send sufficient word and go with us on Saturday. It is not of much importance any way. Trifles all. Only I wish mother to sit down as gently and wontedly in her chamber in your house as if she had never been in any other.

. . . And so, Lidian, I can never bring you back my noble friend, who was my ornament, my wisdom, and my pride. A soul is gone, so costly and so rare that few persons were capable of knowing its price, and I shall have my sorrow to myself; for if I speak of him I shall be thought a fond exaggerator. He had the fourfold perfection of good sense, of genius, of grace, and of virtue as I have never seen them combined. I determined to live in Concord, as you know, because he was there; and now that the immense promise of his maturity is destroyed, I feel not only unfastened there and adrift, but a sort of shame at living at all. I am thankful, dear Lidian, that you have seen and known him to that degree you have. I should not have known how to forgive you an ignorance of him, had he been out of your sight. Thanks, thanks for your kindest sympathy and appreciation of him. And you must be content henceforth with

only a piece of your husband; for the best of his strength lay in the soul with which he must no more on earth take counsel. How much I saw through his eyes! I feel as if my own were very dim. Yours affectionately, WALDO E.

(Journal.) "*Concord, May* 16, 1836. And here I am again at home, but I have come alone. My brother, my friend, my ornament, my joy and pride has fallen by the wayside; or rather has risen out of this dust. Charles died at New York Monday afternoon, May 9th. His prayer that he might not be sick was granted to him. He was never confined to a bed. He rode out on Monday afternoon with mother, promised himself to begin his journey with me on my arrival the next day. On reaching home he stepped out of the carriage alone, walked up the steps and into the house without assistance, sat down on the stairs, fainted, and never recovered. Clean and sweet was his life, untempted almost, and his action on others all-healing, uplifting, and fragrant. I mourn that in losing him I have lost his all, for he was born an orator, not a writer. His written pages do him no justice, and, as he felt the immense disparity between his power of conversation and his blotted paper, it was easy for him to speak with scorn of written composition. Now commences a new and gloomy epoch of my life; I have used his society

so fondly and solidly. It opened itself genially to his warm and bright light, and borrowed color and sometimes form from him. Besides my direct debt to him of many valued thoughts, through what orbits of speculation have we not travelled together! So that it would not be possible for either of us to say, This is my thought; that is yours. I have felt in him the inestimable advantage, when God allows it, of finding a brother and a friend in one. The mutual understanding is then perfect, because nature has settled the constitution of the amity on solidest foundations, and so it admits of mercenary usefulness and of unsparing censure. Then the same persons and facts are known to each, and an occult hereditary sympathy underlies all our intercourse and extends farther than we know. Who can ever supply his place to me? None. I may (though it is improbable) see many as cultivated persons; but his elegance, his wit, his sense, his worship of principles, I shall not find united, — I shall not find them separate. The eye is closed that was to see nature for me and give me leave to see; the taste and soul which Shakspeare satisfied; the soul that loved St. John and St. Paul, Isaiah and David; the acute discernment that divided the good from the evil in all objects around him, — in society, in politics, in church, in books, in persons; the hilarity of thought which awakened good-humor and laughter without shame;

and the endless endeavor after a life of ideal beauty, — these are all gone from my actual world, and will here no more be seen."

TO MISS MARY EMERSON.

I mourn for the commonwealth which has lost, before yet it had learned his name, the promise of his eloquence and rare public gifts. He pleased himself that he had been bred from infancy, as it were, in the public eye; and he looked forward to the debates of the senate on great political questions as to his first and native element. And with reason; for in extempore debate his speech was music, and the precision, the flow, and the elegance of his discourse equally excellent. I shall never hear such speaking as his; for his memory was a garden of immortal flowers, and all his reading came up to him as he talked.

Emerson never found companions who made good his brothers to him, but he began now to make acquaintance with some of the persons whose names are most frequently associated with his. He writes to his brother William: —

CONCORD, *August* 8, 1836.

Mr. Alcott has spent a day here lately, — the world-builder. An accomplished lady is staying with Lidian now, Miss Margaret Fuller. She is quite

an extraordinary person for her apprehensiveness, her acquisitions, and her power of conversation. It is always a great refreshment to see a very intelligent person. It is like being set in a large place. You stretch your limbs and dilate to your utmost size.

He had met Miss Fuller the year before, and she was now making them a long visit, often afterwards repeated and always welcomed, yet, I think, with a slight shudder on Emerson's part; for although he enjoyed the spectacle of so much talent and good-will, and would have been well pleased to add her to his library or his gallery of "influences," yet her eager efforts to disturb his provoking equilibrium, and "to teach this sage [as she writes to some one] all he wants to make him the full-fledged angel, to make him forego these tedious, tedious attempts to learn the universe by thought alone," were apt to bring into play those "repulsions" of which he speaks in his poem of the "Visit." With her ardent, somewhat masterful temperament she was accustomed promptly to establish, almost to dictate, what relations with people she chose; but here, with the best will on both sides, she found herself balked. "She ever seems to crave [says Emerson in his journal] somewhat I have not, or have not for her." What she missed was not appreciation, for he always ad-

mired and lavishly praised her generous nature and her gifts; but close personal intimacy, and that she could never attain. Nobody could, — nobody outside his own family circle and the friends of his childhood; but of this she could never be convinced, and she flung herself against him, as Mr. Higginson says,[1] again and again, often with a painful recoil, which, however, did not throw her into any injustice to Emerson. It was really not his fault; she did not hold the key, and he could not open himself to her. Many letters passed between them, — especially at the *Dial* time, — filled on his side with expressions of admiration and thankfulness, but never giving, what alone could content her, the careless confidence of one who is thinking aloud before his friend. Sometimes he gives her a bit of an unpublished essay, he solicits her letters and her visits, he apologizes for his reserve; but there was always an interval which she could not cross. Here are some specimens; the first without date, but probably in 1839, when she thought of taking up her abode in Concord: —

DEAR MARGARET, — None knows better than I, more 's the pity, the gloomy inhospitality of the man; the want of power to meet and unite with even those whom he loves "in his flinty way."

[1] *Margaret Fuller Ossoli.* By Thomas Wentworth Higginson [American Men of Letters]: p. 300.

What amends can he make to his guests? he asked himself long since. Only to anticipate, and thus if possible mitigate, their disgust and suspicion at the discovery, by apprising them beforehand that this outside of wax covered an inside of stone. Ice has its uses, when deception is not thought of and we are not looking for bread. Being made by chemistry and not by cooks, its composition is unerring, and it has a universal value, as ice, not as glass or gelatine. Would you know more of his history? Diffident, shy, proud, having settled it long ago in his mind that he and society must always be nothing to each other, he received with astonishment the kind regards of such as, coming from the opposite quarter of the heavens, he now calls his friends; with surprise, and, when he dared to believe them, with delight. Can one be glad of an affection which he knows not how to return? I am. Humbly grateful for every expression of tenderness which makes the day sweet and inspires unlimited hopes, I did not deceive myself with thinking that the old bars would suddenly fall. No, I knew that if I would cherish my dear romance I must treat it gently, forbear it long, worship, not use it, and so at last by piety I might be tempered and annealed to bear contact and conversation as well-mixed natures should. Therefore, my friend, treat me always as a mute, not ungrateful though now incommunicable.

You are very gentle and tender in your questions. If you should rate me soundly it would be juster. You have a right to expect great activity, great demonstration, and large intellectual contributions from your friends, and, though you do not say it, you receive nothing. As well be related to mutes as to uncommunicating egoists. Yet I plead not guilty to the malice prepense. 'T is imbecility, not contumacy; though perhaps somewhat more odious. It seems very just, the irony with which you ask whether you may not be trusted, and promise such docility. Alas! we will all promise, but the prophet loiters. Strange disproportion betwixt our apprehension and our power to embody and affirm!

They saw much of each other in these years, and corresponded abundantly in the *Dial* time, but always at some distance. He speaks in his journal in 1841 of these "strange, cold-warm, attractive-repelling conversations with Margaret, whom I always admire, most revere when I nearest see, and sometimes love; yet whom I freeze and who freezes me to silence when we promise to come nearest."

After her departure for Europe he wrote to her from time to time, and was always grateful for her appreciation and sympathy. On the news of her death, he writes: "I have lost in her my audience,

and I hurry now to my work, admonished that I have few days left."

Mr. Alcott visited Concord in 1835, and in 1840 came to live there. Almost from the first he made a prodigious impression upon Emerson.

TO MISS MARGARET FULLER.

CONCORD, *May* 19, 1837.

MY DEAR FRIEND: . . . Mr. Alcott is the great man, and Miss Fuller has not seen him. His book does him no justice, and I do not like to see it. I had not fronted him for a good while, and was willing to revise my opinion. But he has more of the godlike than any man I have ever seen, and his presence rebukes, and threatens, and raises. He *is* a teacher. I shall dismiss for the future all anxiety about his success. If he cannot make intelligent men feel the presence of a superior nature, the worse for them; I can never doubt him. His ideal is beheld with such unrivalled distinctness that he is not only justified but necessitated to condemn and to seek to upheave the vast actual, and cleanse the world.

And in his journal of the same day: "Yesterday Alcott left us, after a three days' visit. The most extraordinary man, and the highest genius of his time. He ought to go publishing through the

land his gospel, like them of old time. Wonderful is the steadiness of his vision. The scope and steadiness of his eye at once rebuke all before it, and we little men creep about ashamed."

And fifteen years afterwards: "It were too much to say that the Platonic world I might have learned to treat as cloud-land had I not known Alcott, who is a native of that country; yet I will say that he makes it as solid as Massachusetts to me."

He soon discovered that Mr. Alcott could not write; and he was afterwards obliged to confess that his friend could not deal with matters of fact. "When Alcott [Emerson writes in his journal in 1846] wrote from England that he was bringing home Wright and Lane [afterwards his associates in the Fruitlands community at Harvard], I wrote him a letter which I required him to show them, saying that they might safely trust his theories, but that they should put no trust in his statement of facts. When they all arrived here, he and his victims, I asked them if he showed them that letter; they answered that he did,—so I was clear. He looks at everything in larger angles than any other, and, by good right, should be the greatest man. But here comes in another trait: it is found, though his angles are of so generous contents, the lines do not meet; the apex is not quite defined. We must allow for the refraction of the lens, but it is the best instrument I have ever met with."

He used to say that it would be a pity if Alcott should survive him, since he alone possessed the means of showing to the world what Alcott really was. I do not find that he ever made the promised elucidation, but the line it would have taken is intimated in the following scrap marked "Influences:" —

"We have seen an intellectual *torso*, without hands or feet, without any organ whereby to reproduce his thought in any form of art whatever, — no musical talent, no gift of eloquence, no plastic skill to paint or carve or build or write, . . . and only working by presence and supreme intelligence, as a test and standard of other minds. Such I call not so much men as *Influences*. Miners say there is sometimes found in California a gold-ore in which the gold is in combination with such other elements that no chemistry is able to separate it without great loss; and there are men of unquestionable perception from whom no doctrine, or work, or printed page, or act of excellence can be detached or quoted. Perhaps the office of these is highest of all in the great society of souls. How often we lament the compensations of power when we see talent suck the substance of the man! How often we repeat the disappointment of inferring general ability from conspicuous particular ability! But the accumulation on one point has drained the trunk, and we say, Blessed are they who have no talent."

Thoreau was a boy at college when Emerson moved to Concord. He graduated in 1837, and they first met, I suppose, at that time, though Emerson had intervened in behalf of his young neighbor somewhat earlier, in a letter to President Quincy, urging for the promising youth a larger share of the beneficiary funds of the college. Thenceforth, until Thoreau's death in 1862, they were intimate, — so far as intimacy was possible with so wayward a nature as Thoreau's; with whom, Emerson said, no equal companion could stand in affectionate relations. He was one of the two or three persons who occasionally shared Emerson's woodland walks, — his week-day walks, for on Sunday afternoons he was not averse to general companionship. In 1841, Thoreau became an inmate of Emerson's house, and stayed there two years. They worked in the garden together, and Thoreau grafted the trees of the orchard in which Emerson afterwards took so much pride and pleasure. In 1847 he came and kept the homestead while Emerson was in Europe.

Emerson greatly admired the inflexible rectitude of the man, and inferred from it high gifts; he rather enjoyed, as the excess of a good quality insufficient in his countrymen and himself, Thoreau's nonchalance, and the stubborn, contradictory attitude into which almost any conversation threw him. If there is a little strut in his style, he said, it is only from a vigor in excess of the size of his body.

Thoreau had a grave, measured way of speaking, and a carriage of the head that reminded one of Emerson and seemed like unconscious imitation. And in his writing there is often something that suggests this. Emerson always denied the imitation, and declared Thoreau to be the most independent and original of men. Yet the coincidence in manner perhaps interfered with his doing entire justice to Thoreau's peculiar quality. In his biographical sketch [1] he extols Thoreau's practical abilities, his accomplishments as a naturalist, a surveyor, a woodsman, praises his wit and has a good word for his poems, but says not a word of that by which he will be remembered, — that flavor of the wild woods, or at least of unkempt nature, which he imparts.

"I told H. T. that his freedom is in the form, but he does not disclose new matter. I am familiar with all his thoughts; they are mine, quite originally dressed. But if the question be what new ideas he has thrown into circulation, he has not yet told what that is which he was created to say." And he made some difficulty about admitting Thoreau's "Winter Walk," surely one of his best pieces, into the *Dial*, when he was the editor.[2]

[1] *Collected Writings*, x. 421.

[2] Yet in his letters Emerson is sometimes less chary of his praise: —

"*July*, 1846. In a short time, if Wiley and Putnam smile, you

Concord and the persons among whom Emerson lived there have been lovingly enlarged upon by Mr. Sanborn in his memoir of Thoreau.[1] Emerson never vaunted the natural charms of the place; "it might seem [he said] to bright eyes a dull rabbit-warren," but it gave him what he wanted. "It is a compensation for the habitual moderation of nature in these Concord fields, and the want of picturesque outlines, the ease of getting about. I go through Concord as through a park. And in Berkshire or at the seashore, unless I could leave my knapsack of habits behind me, I should not be nearer to sun or star." Of the passion for the wilderness he had little or nothing. As much wild nature as he found in the Walden woodlots, or the old roads and deserted farms on the outskirts of the town, he liked to have within reach of

shall have Henry Thoreau's *Excursion on the Concord and Merrimack Rivers*, a seven days' voyage in as many chapters, pastoral as Isaac Walton, spicy as flag-root, broad and deep as Menu. He read me some of it under an oak on the river-bank the other afternoon, and invigorated me."

"*August* 23, 1854. All American kind are delighted with *Walden*, as far as they have dared say. The little pond sinks in these very days as tremulous at its human fame. I do not know if the book has come to you yet, but it is cheerful, sparkling, readable, with all kinds of merits, and rising sometimes to very great heights. We account Henry the undoubted king of all American lions."

[1] *Henry D. Thoreau.* By F. B. Sanborn. [American Men of Letters.] Boston, 1882.

his afternoon walk; but there is always a prompt return to some human or literary interest. His landscapes are always landscapes with figures.

"Delicious summer stroll through the pastures of Barrett, Buttrick, Estabrook farms. The glory of summer; what magnificence! Yet none to see it; one night of frost will kill it all. On the steep park of Conantum I have the old regret, — is all this beauty to perish? Shall none re-make this sun and wind; the sky-blue river, the river-blue sky; the yellow meadow, spotted with sacks and sheets of cranberry gatherers; the red bushes; the iron-gray house, just the color of the granite rocks; the wild orchard? We think of the old benefactors who have conquered these fields; the old Abel, who has absorbed such volumes of sunshine, like a huge melon or pumpkin in the sun.

"To-day at the Cliffs we held our *villegiatura.* I saw nothing better than the passage of the river by the dark clump of trees that line the bank in one spot for a short distance. As the flowing silver reached that point it darkened, and yet every wave celebrated its passage through the shade by one sparkle. But ever the direction of the sparkles was onward, onward; not one receded. At one invariable pace, like marchers in a procession, to solemn music, in perfect time, in perfect order, they marched onward, onward, and I saw the warning of their eternal flow

"When I bought my farm I did not know what a bargain I had in the bluebirds, bobolinks, and thrushes, which were not charged in the bill. As little did I guess what sublime mornings and sunsets I was buying, what reaches of landscape, and what fields and lanes for a tramp. Neither did I fully consider what an indescribable luxury is our Indian River, which runs parallel with the village street, and to which every house on that long street has a back-door which leads down through the garden to the river-bank; where a skiff or a dory gives you, all summer, access to enchantments new every day, and, all winter, to miles of ice for the skater. Still less did I know what good and true neighbors I was buying; men of thought and virtue, some of them now known the country through for their learning, or subtlety, or active or patriotic power, but whom I had the pleasure of knowing long before the country did; and other men, not known widely, but known at home, farmers, not doctors of laws, but doctors of land, skilled in turning a swamp or a sand-bank into a fruitful field, and where witch-grass and nettles grew causing a forest of apple-trees or miles of corn and rye to thrive. I did not know what groups of interesting schoolboys and fair school-girls were to greet me in the highway, and to take hold of one's heart at the school exhibitions."

Emerson was a good citizen and a good neigh-

bor with his neighbors; always went to town-meeting, and listened intently to the strong spirits who ruled the discussions, without taking any part himself. He served on the school-committee, attending the examinations with much interest, particularly the exhibitions of elocution. He was a member and constant attendant of the Social Circle, a club of notables in the town, — "much the best society I have ever known, — consisting always of twenty-five of our citizens; doctor, lawyer, farmer, trader, miller, mechanic; solidest men, who yield the solidest gossip. Harvard University is a wafer in comparison with the solid land which my friends represent. I do not like to be absent from home on Tuesday evenings in winter."

In the autumn (1836) his first child was born, a beautiful boy, of wonderful promise, cut short by his death five years afterwards.

Emerson was now settled in the habits of life to which he ever afterwards adhered. The morning was his time of work, and he took care to guard it from all disturbance. He rose early and went to his study, where he remained until dinner-time, one o'clock, and in the afternoon went to walk. In the evening he was with his family, sometimes reading aloud, or went to his study again, but never worked late, thinking sleep to be a prime necessity for health of body and of mind. He was a sound sleeper, and never got up at night,

as some one has fancied, to jot down thoughts which then occurred to him.

The wide range of Emerson's quotations, and the unhesitating way in which he sometimes speaks upon subjects of learned investigation, have given impressions not altogether correct concerning the character of his reading. He had a quick eye for a good sentence, and never forgot one; but the quotations, I think, are sometimes all that he cared to know of the book; and he would have been partly amused, partly vexed, to hear himself described as a profound student, — of the New Platonists, or of anything to be learned from books. He was a profound student, — of impressions, sentiments, experiences; and was ready to receive them from any source. But of the disengaged curiosity, the readiness to enter into and pursue the ideas of others, that makes the student, the man of letters (or, again, the traveller, the man of the world), he had very little. He did not even pursue his own. He was ever on the watch for them, trying to render them without loss into words, but of their farther relations to each other or to the ideas of other people he was rather incurious. In his spiritual astronomy or search for stars he was the observer of single stars as they came into the field of his telescope; he was not making a map of the heavens, or even of a par-

ticular region; he had nothing to do with the results of other observers. Let each look for himself and report what he sees; then, if each has been faithful, they will all agree; meantime, if any correction be needed, it will be given by the fresh experience which life fails not to supply if we are heedful of its teachings. Books were for the scholar's idle times: at such times Emerson welcomed them for the stimulus they gave him; "to make my top spin," as he said; without much choice, but with an inclination towards memoirs and books abounding in anecdotes, — Plutarch, Montaigne, Spence, Grimm, Saint-Simon, Roederer; books about the first Napoleon; latterly I remember his following Varnhagen von Ense's voluminous memoirs, as the volumes came out. He read the "Vestiges of Creation" with much interest, and treasured in his memory from all kinds of sources many anecdotes and sayings of men of science. In his youth he seems to have read Berkeley and Hume with attention, also Coleridge and Lord Bacon; and he was a reader of English poetry from his early years. After his time of production began, books occupied him less; though at Carlyle's urging, soon after his return from Europe, he made for once something of a study of Goethe, and read every volume, even the "Theory of Colors."

He was not what one would call a critical reader.

His likings and dislikings were very distinct and persistent, but he never troubled himself to account for them. He could see nothing in Shelley, Aristophanes, Don Quixote, Miss Austen, Dickens; he did not often read a novel, even the famous ones. Dante was "a man to put in a museum, but not in your house: another Zerah Colburn; a prodigy of imaginative function, executive rather than contemplative or wise." French literature he did not love, though he was a reader of Sainte-Beuve and of George Sand. On a journey he liked to have Martial or a treatise of Cicero in his hand-bag, partly because he did not read them at home. At home he read no Latin or Greek, though he retained his knowledge of Greek sufficiently to be able, in his later years, to compare the old translation of Plutarch's Morals (a favorite book of his) with the original. Mystical writings — Swedenborg, Behmen, and the like — came always well recommended to him, though they did not engage him very deeply. The New Platonists (in Thomas Taylor's translation) and the Oriental (particularly the Hindoo) religious books, the Bhagavat Gita, the Puranas, and Upanishads, were among his favorites. He often quotes the so-called Chaldæan Oracles, and the like, without troubling himself with any question of their authenticity; not caring, he said, "whether they are genuine antiques or modern counterfeits, as I am only concerned

with the good sentences, and it is indifferent how old a truth is."

In general, after he began to write and publish, his reading was "for the lustres,"—for a touch of suggestion that might help to crystallize the thoughts that were floating within him. He would take up a volume of Plato or the New Platonists, or Von Hammer's translation of Hafiz, and enjoy what he found in them without asking after its credentials. Here and there we find a trace of influence from some book, particularly those he read in early youth, Berkeley, Hume, Coleridge, Sampson Reed's "Growth of the Mind;" but, in general, to look for the source of any way of thinking of his in the Neoplatonists, or in any of the books he read, seems to me like tracing the origin of Jacob Behmen's illumination to the glitter of the pewter tankard, which, he says, awakened in him the consciousness of divine things. Even where the coincidence (as with Fichte, Schleiermacher, Hegel) seemed too close to be accidental, I found reason to think that he had no first-hand acquaintance with the books.

He says in his journal in 1837: "If you elect writing for your task in life, I believe you must renounce all pretensions to reading." Not as if learning were hostile to originality, — the power to originate, he says, is commonly accompanied by assimilating power; he had great regard for schol-

arship, and lamented the want of it in this country; he was impatient of the "self-made men" whose originality rests on their ignorance. But he was thinking merely of his own case: learning, he felt, was not his affair; he was occupied with his own problems. "I have long ago discovered that I have nothing to do with other people's facts. It is enough for me if I can dispose of my own."

It was a maxim with him that power is not so much shown in talent or in successful performance as in *tone;* the absolute or the victorious tone, the tone of direct vision, disdaining all definitions. This had a special attraction for him, in a book or in a person, and may help to explain some predilections of his. He disliked limitations, and welcomed whatever promised to get rid of them, without always inquiring very closely what was left when they were removed.

On the whole, what is most noteworthy in Emerson's relation to books is the slightness of his dependence on them. He lived among his books and was never comfortable away from them, yet they did not much enter into his life. They were pleasant companions, but not counsellors, — hardly even intimates. His writings abound in quotations, and he valued highly the store of sentences laid up in his note-books for use in lecturing. But he quotes, as he himself says, in a way unflattering to his author; there is little trace of that most flattering

kind of quotation which shows itself in assimilation of the thought.

Study, with him, was mainly the study of expression; not the rounding of periods, but the effort to reproduce the impression precisely as it was received. If he was sometimes led astray by what he calls "the point and surprise of a sentence," — his own or another's, — how little he was willing to sacrifice to literary form is shown by the stumbling-blocks he constantly allowed to remain in his verse. His chief, one may almost say his sole, aim was to write in close contact with life and reality.

(Journal.) "The secret of eloquence is to realize all you say. Do not give us counters of base coin, but every word a real value. Only whilst it has new values does it warm and invite and enable to write. The essential mark of poetry is that it betrays in every word instant activity of mind. A man is sometimes enervated as much by words as by any other luxury. A thing represents nature and aboriginal force; but men transformed by books become impotent praters."

"Expression is what we want; not knowledge, but vent. But an utterance, whole, generous, sustained, equal, graduated at will, such as Montaigne, such as Beaumont and Fletcher, so habitually and easily attain, I miss in myself most of all, but also in my contemporaries. I don't know but

I value the name of a thing, that is, the true poet's name for it, more than the thing. If I can get the right word for the moon, or for its manners and influences, the word that suggests to me and to all men its humane and universal beauty and significance, then I have what I want of it: for I have no desire that a road be made from my garden to the moon, or that a deed of its acres and square miles be made over to me."

In his writing, the sentence is the natural limit of continuous effort; the context and connection was an afterthought.

"In writing my thoughts I seek no order, or harmony, or result. I am not careful to see how they comport with other thoughts and other moods: I trust them for that. Any more than how any one minute of the year is related to any other remote minute, which yet I know is so related. The thoughts and the minutes obey their own magnetisms, and will certainly reveal them in time."

His practice was, when a sentence had taken shape, to write it out in his journal, and leave it to find its fellows afterwards. These journals, paged and indexed, were the quarry from which he built his lectures and essays. When he had a paper to get ready, he took the material collected under the particular heading and added whatever suggested itself at the moment. The proportion thus added seems to have varied consid-

erably; it was large in the early time, say to about 1846, and sometimes very small in the later essays.

He was well aware of the unconsecutiveness that came from his way of writing, and liked it as little as anybody: —

(Journal, 1854.) "If Minerva offered me a gift and an option, I would say, Give me continuity. I am tired of scraps. I do not wish to be a literary or intellectual *chiffonier*. Away with this Jew's rag-bag of ends and tufts of brocade, velvet, and cloth-of-gold, and let me spin some yards or miles of helpful twine; a clew to lead to one kingly truth; a cord to bind wholesome and belonging facts."

But it was contrary to his literary creed to aim at completeness of statement: —

"I would not degrade myself by casting about for a thought, nor by waiting for one. If the thought come, I would give it entertainment; but if it come not spontaneously, it comes not rightly at all."

When his morning's work was done he was free to seek fresh inspiration in a book, any book; or in a walk, a ramble in the orchard, where he loved at the right season to prune his trees; or through it, across the brook and the fields, to the grassy lane leading to the Walden woods. Sometimes he went to the orchard before his work, and at one period

he worked regularly in the garden with hoe and spade.

Here are two sketches of Emerson as he was seen at this time, by keen observers from widely different points of view. Miss Martineau came to Concord in 1835; she says of him: —

"He has modestly and silently withdrawn himself from the perturbations and conflicts of the crowd of men, without declining any of the business of life or repressing any of his human sympathies. He is a thinker without being solitary, abstracted, and unfitted for the time. He is ready at every call of action. He lectures to the factory people at Lowell when they ask. He preaches when the opportunity is presented. He is known at every house along the road he travels to and from home, by the words he has dropped and the deeds he has done. The little boy who carries wood for his household has been enlightened by him; and his most transient guests owe to him their experience of what the highest grace of domestic manners may be. . . . Earnest as is the tone of his mind, and placidly strenuous as is his life, an exquisite spirit of humor pervades his intercourse. A quiet gaiety breathes out of his conversation; and his observation, as keen as it is just, furnishes him with perpetual material. . . . If, out of such a harmony, one leading quality is to be distinguished, it is, in him, modest indepen-

dence, . . . an independence equally of thought, of speech, of demeanor, of occupation, and of objects in life; yet without a trace of contempt in its temper or of encroachment in its action."[1]

Hawthorne, somewhat later, says: —

"It was good to meet him in the wood-paths or sometimes in our avenue, with that pure intellectual gleam diffusing about his presence like the garment of a shining one; and he, so quiet, so simple, so without pretension, encountering each man alive as if expecting to receive more than he would impart. . . . It was impossible to dwell in his vicinity without inhaling more or less the mountain atmosphere of his lofty thought."[2]

[1] *Retrospect of Western Travel.* London, 1838: iii. 229.

[2] *Mosses from an Old Manse.* New York, 1850: p. 28.

## CHAPTER IX.

### RELIGION.

In the autumn (1836), Emerson advertised in the Boston papers a course of twelve lectures at the Masonic Temple, — "On the Philosophy of Modern History. The subjects to be treated are the foundations of Religion, Politics, Science, Literature, and Art, in the nature of things: the action of general causes upon them at the present day; the condition and tendencies of these elements of civilization; the popular sciences and the men of genius, as these illustrate the general subject; and the intellectual duties of the existing generation."

The course began on the 8th of December, and the number of the audience (averaging, he says, three hundred and fifty) showed that few as might be the readers of "Nature," there were already a good many persons who liked to hear him.

"How little [he writes in his journal] we are masters of our wits! Mine run away with me. I don't know how to drive the inexorable thoughts. I see them from afar, then they whisk by me: I supplicate, I grieve, I point to the assembly that

shall be; but they will neither run in pairs, nor in strings, nor in any manageable system. But necessity is lord of all, and when the day comes, comes always the old lord and will harness the very air, if need be, to the cart. My lectures are anything but Civil History, but so much lecturing, and now a little printing, have bronzed me; I am grown very dogmatic; and I mean to insist that whatsoever elements of humanity have been the subjects of my studies constitute the indisputable core of Modern History. To such lengths of madness trot we when we have not the fear of criticism before our eyes; and the literary man in this country has no critic."

He wished to call attention, he said in his introduction, not primarily to facts, but to ideas, which create and order facts. History is dull because it is not the portraiture, in act, of man, but a chronicle of the brute strivings and pushings of masses of men under the guidance of certain persons or families. Thus it misses his true and distinctive character. Other creatures are generic, and have no individuals. One is just like another, and each acts after his kind. But every man is a new and incalculable power, of whom it can only be predicted with certainty that he possesses some faculty never yet unfolded. True history will describe the process through which the individual swells to the universal man; his original and eternal pro-

portions brought to light in succession, as each part of the globe is brought by its revolution under the more direct rays of the sun.

Much from these lectures was published three or four years afterwards in the first series of Essays. The substance is already here, and many of the sentences reappeared with little change. The bearing on religion will easily be guessed by readers of the Essays. Only one lecture bore that title, but it was the real subject in all.

After the course was finished in Boston, Emerson was asked to lecture in various places, among others Providence, Rhode Island, whither he went in June, 1837, by the invitation of the Young Men's Association, to repeat the Boston course. Not having time for the whole, he proposed to omit the lecture on "Religion," which had excited some murmurs in the Boston newspapers, and might, he thought, offend the feelings of so orthodox a community. But it was precisely this lecture that the young men desired to hear, and he at last consented, at the suggestion of his friend the Reverend Frederic A. Farley, minister of the Second (Unitarian) Church in Providence, — to whose kindness I owe this anecdote, — to read it in a private room. Among the audience were the President and some of the professors of Brown University, and several clergymen; one of them, says Dr. Farley, "the late Dr. ——, who asked an introduction to Emer-

son. It was amusing to witness the quiet, courteous, patient listening of Emerson, and the persistent but altogether vain efforts of Dr. —— to draw him into an argument or discussion. He said to me afterwards, Your friend Emerson is a very singular person; I could get nothing out of him. Oh, I replied, Mr. Emerson never argues."

During the visit, Dr. Farley one day asked him if he had entirely given up preaching. Emerson answered that at times he felt an inclination to try the experiment once more, and upon being invited to do so he preached on the following Sunday from Dr. Farley's pulpit.

"He selected, from Greenwood's collection, hymns of a purely meditative character, without any distinctively Christian expression. For the Scripture lesson he read a fine passage from Ecclesiasticus, from which he also took his text. The sermon was precisely like one of his lectures in style; the prayers, or what took their place, were wholly without supplication, confession, or praise, but very sweet meditations on nature, beauty, order, goodness, love. The house was crowded. After returning home I found Emerson with his head bowed on his hands, which were resting on his knees. He looked up and said, 'Now tell me, honestly, plainly, just what you think of that service.' I replied that before he was half through I had made up my mind that it was the last time

he should have that pulpit. 'You are right,' he rejoined, 'and I thank you. On my part, before I was half through I felt out of place. The doubt is solved.'"

When I first received this interesting account from Dr. Farley, knowing that Emerson then and for some time afterwards was preaching regularly, I was inclined to believe that the matter had got itself misdated in his recollection. But he does not think so, and I have no doubt he is right, — only that what Emerson said did not mean quite what it might seem to mean. He certainly did not feel himself quite out of place in the pulpit, for he had been preaching ever since his return from Europe, and he continued to preach, for a year and a half regularly and afterwards occasionally, several years longer. But this was in his own neighborhood and to accustomed hearers who felt themselves quite safe with him, without inquiring or leading him to inquire whether he was straying beyond the limits of received doctrine. Not reaching his convictions by investigation and comparison of opinions, but by taking a fresh view, he was not apt to be conscious himself or to remind others of any startling novelties in what he said. He went on, without looking back or to the right or left. But in preaching away from home, especially in the larger towns where the newspaper comments on his Boston lectures had aroused public atten-

tion, he could not help being aware that he was looked upon, with sympathy or with suspicion, as one who came to unsettle Christian belief.

Nothing was farther from his intention. Even had Christianity appeared to him a delusion, he would not have been prompt to say so. Those who find themselves out of accord with the popular religion, he says in one of his lectures, "wait wisely to see what unlooked-for supports the old faith will show when assailed; they look to see if these doubts or these convictions of their private mind are shared by others. And still they never make haste to announce them. It were needless, perhaps mischievous, to shock the settled faith of others. Let them gradually find out the defect, and not perhaps till new and real stays and supports shall appear to take their place. No good man vaunts disbelief, but only aims to put a real motive and law in the place of the false ones removed."

Even the superstitions and falsehoods (as they deemed them) of the Puritan theology, against which his Liberal brethren were contending, were much less intolerable to him, so long as they were united with genuine piety. Granting that there was much in them that reason would reject, "yet falsehoods, superstitions, are the props, the scaffolding, on which how much of society stands. The reason why the secret is kept, and never any ac-

cident discovers the bankruptcy and produces a permanent revolution, is that there is a real object in nature to which reverence instinctively turns. Of this, the false object is the representative, and is, with more or less of distrust, honored for that for which it ought to be." (Journal, 1834.)

The feeling that there had been some loss of reverence in the zeal of investigation and the triumph over the detection of errors in the creed made him look back with something of regret to the time when men had the happiness of believing without inquiry: —

"These Puritans [he writes to Miss Mary Emerson, on occasion of Dr. Ripley's death in 1841], however in our last days they have declined into ritualists, solemnized the heyday of their strength by the planting and the liberating of America. Great, grim, earnest men, I belong by natural affinity to other thoughts and schools than yours, but my affection hovers respectfully about your retiring footsteps, your unpainted churches, strict platforms, and sad offices; the iron-gray deacon, and the wearisome prayer, rich with the diction of ages."

But he was very far from regarding the Christian religion as a delusion. He could not share the belief in the particular redemption of a chosen portion of mankind, but he rejected it, not as a delusion but as a narrowing of the truth. And it

was upon this ground that he had parted from the Liberals; they too impoverished divine revelation by confounding the tradition, that is, the particular relation to persons and times, with the revelation itself.

"I believe the Christian religion to be profoundly true, — true to an extent that they who are styled its most orthodox defenders have never or but in rarest glimpses once or twice in a lifetime reached. I am for the principles; they are for the men. They reckon me unbelieving; I, with better reason, them. They magnify inspiration, miracles, mediatorship, the Trinity, baptism, the eucharist. I let them all drop in sight of the glorious beauty of those inward laws or harmonies which ravished the eye of Jesus, of Socrates, of Plato, of Dante, of Milton, of George Fox, of Swedenborg. With regard to the miracles ascribed to Jesus, I suppose he wrought them. If (which has not yet been done) it should be shown that the account of his miracles is only the addition of credulous and mistaking love, I should be well content to lose them. Indeed, I should be glad. No person capable of perceiving the force of spiritual truth but must see that the doctrines of the teacher lose no more by this than the law of gravity would lose if certain facts alleged to have taken place did not take place. We should lose an argument that weighs with those whom I shall never seek to convince. A miracle is a patch, an afterthought.

"They think that God causes a miracle to make men stare, and then says, Here is truth. They do not and will not perceive that it is to distrust the deity of truth, its invincible beauty, to do God a high dishonor, so to depict Him. They represent the old trumpery of God sending a messenger to raise man from his low estate. Well, then, he must have credentials, and the miracle is the credentials. I answer, God sends us messengers always. I am surrounded by messengers of God, who send me credentials day by day. Jesus is not a solitary, but still a lovely herald." (Journal, 1834.)

"Look at it how we will, the most wonderful fact in history is Christianity; the fact that ten or twenty persons, or, if you please, twice so many, did receive, consciously or unconsciously, the revelations of the moral sentiment, with such depth and tenacity as to live and die in and for them, and to propagate their statement each one to so wide a circle of contemporaries, and then to the next age, that the enthusiasm got a footing in the world and throve and grew into this great Christendom we know so well. Their statement too is very impure, very unequal to the fact. They were instructed by their heart, not by their head. As pieces of argument, their sermons and letters would never be read, they are all local and limitary, narrow, provincial, levitical. But they had this sentiment of humility and of trust in the Eternal. They

could not state it to the understanding, but they carried it in their heart, and it gave them dominion over nations and ages. It quickly got embodied, and as the rapture was presently lost in the wide diffusion, it came to be supposed inherent in certain times and persons. But now in every country the spiritual nature of man refuses any longer to be holden in the wooden stocks of the tradition, and insists that what is called Christianity shall take rank, not formal or peculiar, but strictly on its universal merits, as one act out of many acts of the human mind."

The Liberal reaction, in the midst of which Emerson was born and brought up, was at bottom a movement towards what he calls "realism," — substitution of the religious facts for names and traditions. But the divergence did not show itself at once, in its full significance, on the surface. If the old Church held to the tradition, so did the new; the reform was to consist in restoring the tradition to its pristine shape. Yet what had paralyzed the Puritan religion was not the shortcomings of its theology, the barbarity of the dogmas, but the pretension to orthodoxy, the claim to shut up divine revelation in a set of doctrines. When the measure of our attainment in religious truth becomes the measure of the truth itself, nothing but stagnation of mind can save belief from passing into formalism, into indifference or covert unbelief.

This was what had happened in the latter days of Puritanism. The Puritan tenacity in holding on to dogmas after they were beginning to be obsolete — and the more crudely and literally because they were obsolete — had gradually separated theology from religion, and the Liberal movement issuing from Puritanism found the understandings of men more alive than their religious sentiment. It was easy to discredit the notion of a triune God; it was not easy to find its equivalent, or to translate the religious meaning into a more acceptable form. And yet, unless this were done, there was a break in the tradition that might countenance the opinion that religion was outgrown. An expedient was found in the thought that the revelation had been disfigured by human additions and interpretations, and that all that was needed was to clear away the accretions of false doctrine which had gathered about it in the Dark Ages, and bring it back to the purity in which it was first delivered.

Foremost among these disfigurements was the central and characteristic doctrine of historical Christianity, the dogma of the double nature of Jesus Christ. This was to be rejected as the fabrication of men; having no sufficient warrant in Scripture. The plain sense of the Christian Scriptures, when examined by the rules which we apply to other ancient writings, was that Jesus was a man, divinely commissioned to reveal to mankind the truths of

religion, and that his authority to speak in the name of God was proved by the visible miracles he wrought.

So far the new reform was free to go, but no farther. It was free to reject as unauthorized the settled belief of Christendom ever since the first ages, in the particular which all the Christian world except a handful of neologists agreed in regarding as the most certain and the most vital of all; but it was bound to conform to the belief of the companions and immediate successors of Jesus, and to accept their interpretation of his words and actions as the only evidence of the revelation he brought. It was idle to suppose that the spirit of inquiry once roused would stop here. If Christ was God, he is still with us, speaking in the voice of conscience, and the truth of his teaching is brought home to the believer through his own personal experience. If he was a man, however exalted above the rest of mankind, his message was delivered at a particular time and place, and is received by us at second-hand, through report. It must be taken with due allowance in all ways for human limitations. His religious instructions must have been adapted to the comprehension of those who were to receive them; and even his own conceptions must have come short of the fulness of divine truth.

The dogma of the double nature was an attempt

to get rid of this difficulty, and to declare the endlessness of God's communication of himself without letting go the reality of the historical revelation. But if the dogma was rejected, its place was not filled by the assumption of a special mission; for this only emphasized the limitations of time and place, and brought down the eternal self-revelation of God to the level of a particular event in history.

Thus, as the position of Liberalism (or of one section of it) became well defined and confident, the inquiry it had set on foot began to lose its religious significance, and to be mixed up with matters of probable reasoning. It was inevitable that various probabilities would present themselves; and moreover that minds in which religious sentiment predominated would feel that the truth of religion cannot be a probability, to be determined by the learned investigations of theologians and metaphysicians, but must be a certainty, obvious and inexpugnable for each believer. On the other hand, those for whom the historical evidences were sufficient, if they found themselves in positions of authority, would feel themselves called upon to declare what was true: the cry of infidelity would be raised against those who pretended to look farther, and the position of free inquiry abandoned for a new orthodoxy, narrower and more barefaced than the old, since the only ground of religious certitude had been expressly cut away.

It was in this direction that Liberalism, or at least a prominent section of it, was tending. It was tending to become a sect, with its proof-texts and doctrines essential to salvation, at any rate to Christian fellowship, and so to lose the reason of its existence. The true ground of the new protest against Protestantism was the feeling that the Incarnation, as it was taught even in Protestant churches, but poorly represents the eternal indwelling of God in man, conditioned by man's obedience, which was manifested in Jesus Christ. His participation of the divine nature, so long as it is conceived as the contradiction of his human nature, leaves his mediatorship and our redemption unexplained and incomprehensible; a brute fact, without analogy to anything in our experience. There is no real mediation, no exemplification of the means whereby we may become partakers of the Holy Spirit; but, instead of this, we are bidden to accept the fact that by divine fiat a certain portion of mankind are to be saved, without becoming more worthy of salvation. So represented, the thoughts and actions of Jesus are not as our thoughts and actions, and can afford us no guidance, no motive in the conduct of our lives. His mission, instead of demonstrating the power of moral sentiment to raise man above himself, is a miraculous expedient to make up in some measure for the want of any such power.

It was an easy task to point out the absence of

evidence for such a scheme of the Divine Providence: it had never had any evidence except its explaining certain facts of the religious consciousness, and when these facts changed their shape their evidence vanished with them. But to stop here would be to involve religion in the reproach that had fallen upon theology. The part of Liberalism, Emerson thought, was to ask in what shape the religious facts *now* present themselves; to translate the theological metaphors into the language of real life.

To Emerson the fact that was imaged in the dogma of Christ's divinity is the infinitude of man's nature; the boundless inspiration that opens to him as he opens himself to receive it. The Liberal preachers, he thought, in place of occupying themselves with the speculative errors of Calvinism, or with any questions of ontology, ought to take their stand upon the ground of universal human experience, and call upon men to behold the presence of God in every gleam of human virtue, however dim and distorted, and not merely in the eminent example of Jesus. They ought to present the idea of salvation, not as a mystic formula, but as a universal truth, realized wherever a man, through death to selfishness, rises to the life of humanity, — a life governed by the perception that all private and separate good is a delusion.

There was nothing novel in the conception.

Dr. Channing, ten years before, at Mr. Farley's ordination in Providence, had declared that God is another name for human excellence raised to an ideal perfection, and that true religion consists in unfolding his nature within us. Else we should be as incapable of receiving a law from heaven as the brute; the thunders of Sinai might startle the outward ear, but would have no meaning or authority for the soul. What Christ reveals is that heaven is the perfection of the mind, and he reveals it by exemplifying it.[1]

But, to the Liberals in general, this seemed rather dangerous doctrine. They welcomed Channing's aid in denying that Jesus Christ was God, but they were not ready to admit that he was a man. They *said* he was a man like ourselves, but in the same breath they spoke of him as our Saviour, the Author and Finisher of our faith, and thereby removed him as far as ever from the sphere of human experience.

So far as these titles were only the overflow of an enthusiastic affection that does not measure its words, there was nothing in them that was repugnant to Emerson, any more than to Channing, who often used such language in his sermons. The Sabbath, with its hallowed associations and language redolent of the ages of faith, Emerson says

[1] Channing's *Works.* Boston, 1862: iii. 228–32. And the Sermon at the installation of Rev. Mellish Irving Motte, Emerson's classmate, in the same year (1828).

reminded him of his "inherited advantages in a certain normal piety, a levitical education. I cannot hear the young men whose theological instruction is exclusively owed to Cambridge and to public institution without feeling how much happier was my star, which rained on me influences of ancestral religion." (Journal, 1837.)

"We are learning to look as on chivalry at the sweetness of the ancient piety which makes the genius of A Kempis, Scougal, Taylor, Herbert. It is a beautiful mean, equidistant from the hard, sour Puritan on one side and the empty negation of Rationalism on the other. It is the spirit of David and of Paul. Who shall restore to us the odoriferous Sabbaths that made the earth and the humble roof a sanctity?"

There might be much in them that a severe common sense would condemn, but the very affront to common sense was a tribute to the depth of sentiment from which they came: —

"It seemed to me, at church to-day, that the Communion Service, as it is now and here celebrated, is a document of the dulness of the race. Then presently, when I thought of the divine soul of my Nazarene, whose name is used here, and considered how these my good neighbors, the bending deacons with their cups and plates, would have straightened themselves to sturdiness if the proposition came before them to honor thus a known

fellow-man, I was constrained to feel the force of genius that, hallowing once those Hebrew lips, should propagate its influence thus far, and not be quite utterly lost in these ultimate shoals and shores of our Concord congregation."

He had refused to administer the Communion; but when his friend Dr. Bartol afterwards came to consult him upon similar scruples, Emerson advised him to remain at his post. It was better, he thought, to remain in the existing forms and uplift and vivify them by faith, so long as that was possible. And the possibility was a question of fact which every one must decide for himself. We might be giving too much importance to forms, in our readiness to cry out against them, as well as in upholding them.

"He is shallow [Emerson writes in his journal] who rails at men and their contrivances, and does not see Divinity behind all their institutions and all their fetches; even such as are odious and paltry."

"It is not good to say with too much precision and emphasis that we are encroached upon by the claims of Jesus in the current theology. It brings us into a cold, denying, unreligious state of mind."

Still, where adherence to tradition goes so far as to become the substitute for faith, we are forced to protest: —

"Our quoting of Scripture seems to deny the

omnipresence, the eternity of God. Once He spoke through good men these special words. Now, if we have aught high and holy to do, we must wrench somehow their words to speak it in; we have none of our own. Humbly rather let us go and ask God's leave to use the hour and language that now is. Cannot you ransack the graveyards and get your great-grandfathers' clothes also? It is like the single coat in Santa Lucia, in which the islanders one by one paid their respects to the new governor." (Journal, 1838.)

The ascriptions of honor to Jesus in the new theology, Emerson thought betrayed a want of faith in his doctrine. He is not truly honored by setting him up apart from his fellow-men, as the recipient of a peculiar inspiration from which they are excluded, for that is virtually denying the universality and the authority of his revelation. In that view he does not reveal God to us, but communicates a particular theology which we are to receive upon his word; as the Jews received their theology from the Scribes. This is to build our church on the language of Jesus, and not on his principles. His glory is that he sets aside all second-hand teaching and all probable opinions about religion, and calls upon men to listen to the eternal revelation in the breast; the voice of God speaking the same truth in an ever-fresh sense to each. Jesus did not condemn the teaching of the Scribes

because it was false, but because it usurped the authority of conscience. His faith, if we had it instead of talking about it, would make us look beyond any attainment of human wisdom or virtue, even his own. His true title to our supreme reverence among the sons of men is that he fills us with a sense of the endlessness of divine truth and of our capacity for it. It was not his faith, but the want of it, the spiritual deadness of the age, that showed itself in the consecration of his person, his words, and actions. The thought that a man, a being in all things like ourselves, could be so filled with the consciousness of God's presence as to lose sight of his own individuality, and to think and act as universal man, was presented from the Liberal pulpits as something so monstrous that it could only be admitted after reason had been stunned by a portent from the sky.

These thoughts had long moved Emerson with the desire to rouse his fellow-believers to a more lively sense of what their belief really meant, and to persuade them to bring their professions of faith into nearer accord with the reality. He had no wish to attack the popular idols; he only wished that they should not obscure the real objects of worship. What these objects were was too plain to need argument, but to set them in their place might require gifts which he had not, — which he hoped to attain through patient faithfulness to his convictions: —

"When the young philosopher forgets men's opinions, nothing seems so worthy employment, or rather life, as religious teaching. If I could persuade men to listen to their interior conviction; if I could express, embody, their interior convictions, that were indeed life. It were to cease being a figure, and to act the action of a man. But, for that work, he must be free and true. He must not seek to weld what he believes to what he does not wish publicly to deny." (Journal, 1835.)

He might have preferred, he says, the ministrations of the Church of England or of Rome as the medium of public worship; since here was at least the *form* of worship, a public acknowledgment of God's presence, instead of opinions about Him. But they were committed and exclusive, whilst the Unitarian pulpit was still open. Yet here also he found, he says, the dear old church still in his way. In the Unitarian pulpits he was allowed and expected to assume that Christ was a man, but he was expected at the same time to acknowledge that the record of Christ's teaching was the sum of divine revelation.

He did not propose to take the position by storm, but he thought it might be turned by simply keeping on his way, manifesting his own faith, and ignoring all that he rejected. If he could touch the right chord in men's minds, all would feel that the ignoring of Christ's official authority was the

recognition of his real and living authority, — the only authority that brings its own credentials and is independent of human support.

This was the experiment he had proposed to try in Mr. Farley's pulpit. He wrote in his journal a year or two before: —

"It were worth trial whether the distinction between a spiritual and a traditional religion cannot be made apparent to an ordinary congregation. There are parts of faith so real and self-evident that, when the mind rests in them, the pretensions of the most illuminated sect pass for nothing. But to show men the nullity of church-going compared with the real exaltation of their being, I think might even promote parish objects, and draw them to church. To show the reality and infinite depth of spiritual laws — that all the maxims of Christ are true to the core of the world; that there is not, cannot be, any cheating of nature — might be apprehended. I should begin with my old saws: that nothing can be given; everything is sold: that love compels love; hatred, hatred: that action and reaction are always equal, and no evil exists in society but has its check, which coexists: nothing is free but the will of man, and that only to procure his own virtue: punishment not follows but accompanies crime. 'Mere morality?' It is the distinction of Christianity that it is moral: all that is personal in it is naught. When any one comes

who speaks with better insight into moral nature, he will be the new gospel. If I could put within your grasp what you now dimly apprehend, make you feel the moral sublime, you would never think of denying my inspiration."

When the experiment failed, he turned back to the lyceum and the lecturer's platform, still feeling that his true place was in the pulpit, and that a happier day might restore him to it. He writes in his journal in 1840: —

"In all my lectures I have taught one doctrine, namely, the infinitude of the private man. This the people accept readily enough and even with loud commendation as long as I call the lecture Art, or Politics, or Literature, or the Household; but the moment I call it Religion they are shocked, though it be only the application of the same truth which they receive everywhere else, to a new class of facts."

The very different reception which the doctrine met when it was presented on a week-day under the guise of a literary entertainment, in the oration on the "American Scholar," before the Phi Beta Kappa Society in August, and in the lectures on "Human Culture" in December, seems to have determined Emerson to relinquish the slight hold he still had on the church, and he informed the Lexington committee early in the winter that he meant to give up his charge there.

The Phi Beta Kappa speech (August 31, 1837), Mr. Lowell says, "was an event without any former parallel in our literary annals, a scene always to be treasured in the memory for its picturesqueness and its inspiration. What crowded and breathless aisles, what windows clustering with eager heads, what enthusiasm of approval, what grim silence of foregone dissent!"[1]

The scholar's duties, Emerson said, are all comprised in self-trust. He is to feel himself inspired by the Divine Soul which also inspires all men. In the distribution of functions he is the delegated intellect: his office is to transmute life into truth; to detach the events and the business of life from their accidental associations, and show them in their true order; to unsettle all conventional values, and rate everything at its true worth to mankind. He is to cheer, to raise, and to guide men by showing them facts amidst appearances. "These being his functions, it becomes him to feel all confidence in himself, and to defer never to the popular cry. Let him not quit his belief that a popgun is a popgun, though the ancient and honorable of the earth affirm it to be the crack of doom."

The oration, says Dr. Holmes, was "our Intellectual Declaration of Independence;" a much-needed monition to the cultivated class of persons in New England to think for themselves instead of taking their opinions from Europe or from books.

[1] *My Study Windows.* Boston, 1871: p. 197.

The lectures on "Human Culture" in the following winter were an expansion of the same thought. The individual is the whole, — is the world. Man, who has been in how many tedious ages esteemed an appendage to his fortunes, to a trade, to an army, to a law, to a state, now discovers that these things, nay, the great globe itself and all which it inherits, are but counterparts of mighty faculties that dwell peacefully in his mind; and that it is a state of disease which makes him the servant of his auxiliaries and effects. Culture is the unfolding of these potentialities. The only motive at all commensurate with his force is the ambition to discover his latent powers, and to this the trades and occupations which men follow, the connections they form, their fortunes in the world, and their particular actions are subordinate and auxiliary. The true culture is a discipline so universal as to demonstrate that no part of a man was made in vain.

The demonstration is carried out in successive lectures on "The Hands," "The Head," "The Eye and Ear," "The Heart," "Being and Seeming," "Prudence," "Heroism," "Holiness:" that is to say, man's education by manual labor; by the perception of truth; by the sense of beauty, in art and in poetry; by his affections (his "otherism" Emerson calls this part of man's nature), and the reaction of the will against the tendency of his

social disposition to involve him in tradition and routine; by the economy of his daily living, and the stand he is sometimes called upon to make against it; lastly, by the highest ascension of the soul, the dominion of the moral sentiment.

Large portions of these lectures appeared afterwards in the Essays, especially those of the first series; the lecture on "Prudence" is given there almost entire; also, I suppose, that on "Heroism," the manuscript of which is wanting. It was in this lecture that he spoke of Lovejoy (who had been killed by a pro-slavery mob in Illinois a few months before) as a martyr for the rights of free speech and opinion; whereat, says Mr. George P. Bradford, "some of his friends and sympathizers felt the sort of cold shudder which ran through the audience at the calm braving of the current opinion." [1]

The attendance on this course was large, and "much larger [he writes in his journal] at the close than at the beginning. I think five hundred persons at the closing lectures. A very gratifying interest on the part of the audience was evinced in the views offered, which were drawn chiefly out of the materials already collected in this journal. The ten lectures were read on ten pleasant winter evenings on consecutive Wednesdays. Thanks to the Teacher of me and of all, the Upholder, the

[1] *Memorial History of Boston*, iv. 306.

Health-giver; thanks and lowliest wondering acknowledgment."

A few days afterwards he wrote to his wife: —

*February* 10, 1838.

. . . Yesterday I went to Lexington and told the committee I wished to put off my charge there, and, if possible, commit it to Mr. [John Sullivan] Dwight. They consent, provided I engage to supply and then send Mr. Dwight, rather than put it on them to engage him. It is a trifle, and I submit, astonished to arrive at the dignity of patronage. But does not the Eastern Lidian, my Palestine, mourn to see the froward man cutting the last threads that bind him to that prized gown and band, the symbols black and white of old and distant Judah?

Yet, while speaking thus lightly, he felt it to be a serious misfortune that the vantage-ground of the pulpit should be lost for want of ability or disposition in those who occupied it to realize the meaning of the words they used. He did not disguise from himself the difficulties of the attempt, but, difficult or not, it ought to be made.

"It seemed to me [he writes in his journal, March, 1838] when I described the possible church, as if very hardly could any such sincerity and singleness be retained as was needful to a worship;

very hardly even by such saints and philosophers as I could name. This morbid delicacy of the religious sentiment, this thin existence fluttering on the very verge of non-existence, accuses our poverty, jejune life. It will be better by and by, will it not? Will it not, when habitual, be more solid, and admit of the action of the will without deceasing?"

He felt the difficulty in his own case in a want of that definiteness of views and heat in enforcing them which is a main secret of persuasive speech. People like a preacher who has made up his mind and can tell what is to be believed and what is to be done. Emerson himself somewhere remarks that we do not listen readily to one who we feel is not committed to what he says. Now Emerson was never committed, had never made up his mind. "I am always insincere [he says [1]] as always knowing there are other moods." He was never insincere, but it would be hard to find a moralist of equal earnestness and entireness of conviction who is so little engaged to his own opinions. He was not only ready, but eager, to admit that the truth may justify other conclusions. Here is the ground of his enjoyment of Montaigne, in spite of much in Montaigne that repelled him. He had nothing of Montaigne's intellectual epicureanism, but he heartily sympathized with his impatience of all

[1] "Nominalist and Realist." *Collected Writings*, iii. 235.

pretensions to lay down the law. He goes beyond Montaigne in this, for Montaigne is apt to be dogmatical in his skepticism; doubt seems to him the height and the end of wisdom; to Emerson it is only the means. Dislike of systematic reasoning was not with him the effect of a despair of truth, a settled conviction that we can never know anything for certain, but it came from the feeling that our apprehension of truth ought to assure us that it does not end where we lose sight of it.

This catholicity of mind, which was as natural and easy to Emerson as partisanship is to most of us, was no doubt an essential condition of his peculiar influence. But it was not favorable to success as a preacher. "There is no strong performance [he says] without a little fanaticism in the performer;" and nowhere is it more needed than in one who would convert men to better ways of thinking about religion by discourse from the pulpit. All presumptions are against him, and they can be dislodged only by creating in the minds of his hearers a new set of images, making them see the objects of worship as he sees them; and for this purpose there must be a singleness of view that peremptorily excludes all other views.

Emerson admired, perhaps sometimes envied, the "absolute tone" of some of his contemporaries or immediate predecessors: Buckminster, Channing, Greenwood; the imperious rhetoric of Car-

lyle; the affluent imagery of Father Taylor, the Methodist preacher to the sailors,[1] — nothing so

[1] Emerson, while he was at the Second Church, sometimes preached at Taylor's Bethel, and Taylor afterwards lectured and preached in Concord, and spent the night at Emerson's house. "A wonderful man [Emerson writes in his diary]; I had almost said a perfect orator. The utter want and loss of all method, the bright chaos come again of his bewildering oratory certainly bereaves it of power, — but what splendor, what sweetness, what richness, what depth, what cheer! The Shakspeare of the sailor and the poor. God has found one harp of divine melody to ring and sigh sweet music amidst caves and cellars. He is an example, — I at this moment say, the single example we have of an inspiration; for a wisdom not his own, not to be appropriated by him, which he cannot recall or even apply, sails to him on the gale of this sympathetic communication with his auditory. He is a very charming object to me. I delight in his great personality, the way and sweep of the man which, like a frigate's way, takes up for the time the centre of the ocean, paves it with a white street, and all the lesser craft do courtesy to him and do him reverence. The wonderful and laughing life of his illustrations keeps us broad awake; a string of rockets all night. He described his bar-room gentry as 'hanging, like a half-dead bird, over a counter.' He describes —— out on her errands of charity 'running through the rain like a beach-bird.' 'I am half a hundred years old, and I have never seen an unfortunate day; there are none.' 'I have been in all the four quarters of the world, and I never saw any men I could not love.' 'The world is just large enough for the people; there's no room for a partition wall.' What an eloquence he suggests! Ah! could he guide those grand sea-horses with which he caracoles on the waters of the sunny ocean! But no, he is drawn up and down the ocean currents by the strong sea-monsters only on that condition, that he shall not guide."

Taylor, on his part, loved Emerson, though of Transcendentalism he had but a low opinion. Dr. John Pierce records in his

quickly attracted him in other men. But, for himself, had the choice been open to him, he would after all, I think, have preferred his own lot with its compensations. He must be free; but these men were the victims of their faculty; their power was conditioned by the poverty of their aims. His aim was to keep his mind open to new light and to spur men up to doing the like. This, he was coming to see, was the necessity of his nature, and he accepted it as he accepted every other fact, with serenity, but not without a moment of regret, since it involved the failure of his cherished purpose.

"I lament [he writes in his journal, 1838–39] that I find in me no enthusiasm, no resources for the instruction and guidance of the people when they shall discover that their present guides are blind. This Convention of Education is cold, but I should perhaps affect a hope that I do not feel if

diary with cordial sympathy a saying of Taylor's on coming out from hearing some Transcendental discourse: "It would take as many sermons like that to convert a human soul as it would quarts of skimmed milk to make a man drunk." But of Emerson he said to Governor Andrew: "Mr. Emerson is one of the sweetest creatures God ever made; there is a screw loose somewhere in the machinery, yet I cannot tell where it is, for I never heard it jar. He must go to heaven when he dies, for if he went to hell the devil would not know what to do with him. But he knows no more of the religion of the New Testament than Balaam's ass did of the principles of the Hebrew grammar." (Mrs. E. D. Cheney, at the Memorial meeting at Concord, July 28, 1884.)

I were bidden to counsel it. I hate preaching, whether in pulpits or in teachers' meetings. Preaching is a pledge, and I wish to say what I feel and think to-day, with the proviso that to-morrow perhaps I shall contradict it all. Freedom boundless I wish."

The attitude of inquiry is not the attitude of worship, nor are men readily united in a church by throwing them on themselves. Emerson's faith was full enough to keep its course after it had left the traditionary channels, but it had not the abundance that was needed to overflow and inundate the creeks and shallows of "an ordinary congregation." He could not communicate the security of his own hold upon the realities of religion amid the universal thaw and dissolution of the forms, and new forms had not defined themselves with sufficient clearness to his mind. Yet, though he felt it to be out of his power to fulfil the requirements, the need of the pulpit to the community appeared to him as vital as ever. He writes in his diary in 1838: —

"I dislike to be a clergyman and refuse to be one. Yet how rich a music would be to me a holy clergyman in my town! It seems to me he cannot be a man, quite and whole; yet how plain is the need of one, and how high — yes, highest — is the function!"

He would at least declare his sense of what the

requirements were, or, any way, the negative conditions; what must be avoided if public worship was to retain its place in the social economy: —

"I ought to sit and think, and then write a discourse to the American clergy, showing them the ugliness and unprofitableness of theology and churches at this day, and the glory and sweetness of the moral nature, out of whose pale they are almost wholly shut. Present realism as the front face, and remind them that I shrink and wince as soon as the prayers begin, and am very glad that my tailor has given me a large collar to my wrapper, the prayers are so bad."

"If I go into the churches in these days, I usually find the preacher, in proportion to his intelligence, to be cunning, so that the whole institution sounds hollow. . . . But in the days of the Pilgrims and Puritans, the preachers were the victims of the same faith with which they whipped and persecuted other men, and their sermons are strong, imaginative, fervid, and every word a cube of stone."

The occasion was given, a day or two afterwards, by an invitation from the graduating class of Divinity College, Cambridge, to deliver the customary discourse upon their entering the active Christian ministry. His address, which seems to have been struck off at a heat, is the only one of his writings, so far as I know, upon which he be-

gan by making a regular division of his topic into heads; and there is even a pretty full sketch of the exordium.

He knew of course that what he had to say would not be acceptable to the authorities of the college, nor perhaps to the Unitarians generally; but the evils he deplored were so obvious that there could be no difference of opinion as to their existence, whatever might be the best way of getting rid of them. He writes in his journal, July 8th: —

"We shun to say that which shocks the religious ear of the people, and to take away titles even of false honor from Jesus. But this fear is an impotence to command the moral sentiment. If I can so imbibe that wisdom as to utter it well, instantly love and awe take place. The reverence for Jesus is only reverence for this; and, if you can carry this home to any man's heart, instantly he feels that all is made good, and that God sits once more on his throne. When I have as clear a sense as now that I am speaking simple truth, without any bias, any foreign interest in the matter, all railing, all unwillingness to hear, all danger of injury to the conscience, dwindle and disappear. I refer to the discourse, now growing under my eye, to the Divinity School."

The discourse was delivered, on the 15th of July (1838), in the chapel of the school, in the presence of several persons besides the students, among them

Reverend Henry Ware, Jr., Emerson's former colleague at the Second Church, but now the Professor of Sacred Eloquence and the Pastoral Care. After the services, Mr. Ware spoke to Emerson in his usual friendly way, expressing some qualified assent, which, however, he found himself the next day obliged still further to qualify in a letter expressing his appreciation of "the lofty ideas and beautiful images of spiritual life" contained in the address, but confessing that some of Emerson's statements appeared to him more than doubtful, and that their prevalence would tend to overthrow the authority and influence of Christianity.

Emerson was as much alive to the danger as were most of his Liberal brethren, perhaps more alive than most of them.

"Consider [he writes in his journal at this time] that always a license attends reformation. We say, Your actions are not registered in a book by a recording angel for an invisible king, — action number one, number two, up to number one million, — but the retribution that shall be is the same retribution that now is. Base action makes you base; holy action hallows you. Instantly the man is relieved from a terror that girded him like a belt, has lost the energy that terror gave him, and when now the temptation is strong he will taste the sin and know. Now I hate the loss of the tonic. The end is so valuable; to have escaped the degrada-

tion of a crime is in itself so pure a benefit that I should not be very scrupulous as to the means. I would thank any blunder, any sleep, any bigot, any fool, that misled me into such a good."

But it was a danger that must be faced: we must be saved, if we are saved at all, by the strength of our convictions, not by a pious regard to their weakness. Was not the alarm at scepticism itself a covert scepticism? Did it not betray a want of confidence in the reality of religion?

"Truth will not maintain itself, they fancy, unless they bolster it up; and the religion of God, the being of God, they seem to think dependent on what we say of it. This is the natural feeling in the mind whose religion is external. It cannot subsist, it suffers shipwreck if its faith is not confirmed by all surrounding persons. A believer, a mind whose faith is consciousness, is never disturbed because other persons do not yet see the fact which he sees." (Journal, October, 1838.)

Emerson was fully alive to the possible risks from the decay of Calvinism. "The popular religion [he says] is an excellent constable." But if the constable was disregarded, might it not be that there was less need of him? Any way there was nothing on the surface to justify the apprehension that the bonds of society were relaxed. Indeed, the new speculations were not very widely heeded. Beyond Boston and Cambridge, and here and there

a solitary thinker whom they influenced, orthodoxy still reigned supreme, and orthodoxy looked down with unconcern upon the squabblings of the rationalists and the new lights who had usurped the ancient seats of piety and learning; not perhaps distinguishing very clearly between the different parties. Some of the orthodox newspapers even had a good word for Emerson, and defended him against the attacks of the Liberals.

But among the ministers who came together at the Thursday lecture in Boston, there was a good deal of stir, which communicated itself to the circles they influenced. Hard words were said, and when the address appeared in print it was sharply attacked in the *Daily Advertiser*, a leading Boston newspaper (August 27, 1838). The article was not signed, but it was generally ascribed to Mr. Andrews Norton, ex-Professor of Biblical Literature in the Divinity School; a man of acute intellect and a commanding personality, and, I suppose, the foremost theologian of the Liberal Christians. After a general anathema upon Miss Martineau, the atheist Shelley, Cousin, Carlyle, and the pantheist Schleiermacher, as planters or fosterers of the new school of Transcendentalism that was keeping our community in a perpetual stir with ill-understood notions, obtained by blundering, at second-hand, through the crabbed and disgusting obscurity of the worst German speculatists, it comes down upon Emerson's address: —

"The state of things described might seem a mere insurrection of folly, a sort of Jack Cade rebellion, which must soon be put down, if those engaged in it were not gathering confidence from neglect, and had not proceeded to attack principles which are the foundation of human society and human happiness. Silly women and silly young men, it is to be feared, have been drawn away from their Christian faith, if not divorced from all that can properly be called religion. The evil is becoming for the time disastrous and alarming, and of this fact there could hardly be a more extraordinary and ill-boding evidence than" —— Emerson's discourse; concerning which "it will be sufficient to state generally that the author professes to reject all belief in Christianity as a revelation, . . . and that if he believes in God in the proper sense of the term, which one passage might have led his hearers to suppose, his language is very ill-judged and indecorous."

The article concludes by explaining that the highly respectable officers of the institution were in no wise responsible for this insult to religion, which was not invited by them, but by the members of the graduating class; who have therefore become accessories, perhaps innocent accessories, to the commission of a great offence. And they are warned that, should any one, approving the doctrines of this discourse, assume the character of

a Christian teacher, he would deceive his hearers and be guilty of a practical falsehood, for the most paltry of temptations; he would consent to live a lie for the sake of being maintained by those whom he had cheated.

I do not recall this "storm in our wash-bowl," as Emerson describes it in a letter to Carlyle,[1] with any wish to invite reproach upon the memory of a strenuous servant of the Lord, whose excess of zeal betrayed him into these uncharitable expressions. They were only the weighty declaration (perhaps somewhat overweighted) of what many good and kindly men, some of them well inclined to Emerson, felt, and thought should be declared. But it is instructive as showing how firm a grasp orthodoxy still had upon minds in New England for whom the brains of it, so to speak, were out; who had expressly repudiated its whole theoretical foundation. And it shows how natural it is for the most advanced views in religion, where they start from the assumption that the truth is a *depositum*, a definitive communication from on high, to fall into intolerance and denunciation of any further advance; how the last reformer, as Emerson says, may seem to reformers more damnable than the Pope himself.

This was no doubt an extreme case. In general, the Liberal Christians, while denouncing Emer-

[1] *Carlyle-Emerson Correspondence*, i. 183.

son's opinions, seem to have been careful not to include him in their denunciations. The *Christian Examiner*, the leading Unitarian periodical (then edited, I believe, by the Reverend James Walker, himself suspected of lax opinions), felt obliged to speak of the address, as a whole, with reprobation, as neither good divinity nor good sense, but still regarded the author with respect and friendship. Reverend Chandler Robbins, Emerson's successor at the Second Church, declared in the *Christian Register* that Emerson had never been considered a regular Unitarian minister, but that he was a highly gifted, accomplished, and holy man; at heart and in life a Christian.[1] Reverend Convers Francis, who succeeded Mr. Ware in the professorship at the Divinity School, spent a night at Emerson's house soon after the address. In a passage in his diary, which I am allowed to insert, he says: —

"When we were alone, he talked of his discourse at the Divinity School, and of the obloquy it had brought upon him. He is perfectly quiet amidst the storm. To my objections and remarks he gave the most candid replies. Such a calm, steady, simple soul, always looking for truth and living in wisdom, in love for man and goodness, I have never met. He is not a philosopher, he is a seer. If you see truth as he does, you will recognize him

[1] *Christian Examiner*, November, 1838, p. 266; *Christian Register*, September 29.

for a gifted teacher; if not, there is little or nothing to be said. But do not brand him with the names of visionary, or fanatic, or pretender; he is no such thing; he is a true, godful man, though in his love for the ideal he disregards too much the actual."

This would be the feeling of most persons who took any interest in the matter, outside the circle of those who, from their position, felt themselves bound to defend Unitarianism against the charge of unscriptural teaching, and therefore to warn all and sundry against confounding the Unitarian belief with the unauthorized opinions which might sometimes be heard from Unitarian pulpits.

Emerson's friend Henry Ware (*le bon Henri*, he somewhere calls him) was in this position, and found himself perplexed between his respect and love for Emerson and an acute sense of duty, requiring him to denounce the errors into which Emerson had fallen. The doctrine that "the soul knows no persons" seemed to him to deserve the charge of atheism; and he freed his soul in a sermon to the divinity students, delivered and printed shortly after the appearance of Emerson's address. He sent a copy of the sermon to Emerson, with a letter saying that it had been regarded as controverting some of his positions, and that it was indeed written partly with that view. But he was anxious to have it understood that he was not

attacking them as Emerson's; not being perfectly aware of the precise nature of his opinions, or of the arguments by which they might be justified to his mind.

Emerson replied in a letter which has often been quoted, as it deserves to be, for the entire serenity of temper it displays, but also as a confession that he was incapable of reasoning. There is no one, he says, less willing or less able to be polemic. "I could not possibly give you one of the 'arguments' you cruelly hint at, on which any doctrine of mine stands; for I do not know what arguments mean in reference to any expression of thought."[1] But there is danger of misunderstanding here. Emerson was no doubt always disinclined to argument, but upon this occasion argument would have been out of place. He was trying to rouse his contemporaries to a livelier sense of the facts of religion, and this could never be done by argument. A man who is conscious always of standing in the presence of God may proceed from this experience to inferences concerning the nature of the being it reveals, and may support his conclusions by argument; that is, he may theologize. But no theological arguments will ever prove the being of God to an unreligious man, any more than scientific arguments about light will prove to a blind man the reality of colors. He has no means of verifying

[1] See the correspondence in Appendix B.

the data upon which the arguments rest; he may admit them or not, but they are to him mere theoretical assumptions. Mr. Ware's argument is that the attributes we apply to God, — his righteousness and loving-kindness, — unless they belong to a person, are mere abstractions, empty names. Emerson, had he been a polemic, might have replied that they were no abstractions to him; and that if these qualities constitute a nature essentially unlike ours, if the righteousness and the loving-kindness of God are different in kind from the human virtues to which we give these names, then the God asserted by his friend was something less than an abstraction; he was a nonentity, a being characterized by inconceivable predicates. If they are the same, then the doctrine that the soul knows no persons need only mean that our knowledge of these divine attributes does not warrant us in ascribing to God the limitations of time and place which belong to them in human beings.

Had the two men thought out their theology, I am not sure that it would have been very different. Emerson might, "in his metaphysics,"[1] deny personality to God; but he never gave much attention to his metaphysics, and what he means by personality seems to be nothing more than limitation to an individual. A few months before the address, he was visited by some of the divinity students,

[1] *Collected Writings*, ii. 58.

who questioned him upon this point. He writes in his diary: —

"*March*, 1838. What shall I answer to these friendly youths who ask of me an account of theism, and think the views I have expressed of the impersonality of God desolating and ghastly? I say that I cannot find, when I explore my own consciousness, any truth in saying that God is a person, but the reverse. I feel that there is some profanation in saying he is personal. To represent him as an individual is to shut him out of my consciousness. He is then but a great man, such as the crowd worships. The natural motions of the soul are so much better than the voluntary ones that you will never do yourself justice in dispute. The thought is not then taken hold of 'by the right handle;' does not show itself proportioned and in its true bearings. It bears extorted, hoarse, and half witness. I have been led, yesterday, into a rambling exculpatory talk on theism. I say that here we feel at once that we have no language; that words are only auxiliary and not adequate, are suggestions and not copies of our cogitation. I deny personality to God because it is too little, not too much. Life, personal life, is faint and cold to the energy of God. For Reason and Love and Beauty, or that which is all these, — it is the life of life, the reason of reason, the love of love."

If the mark of personality be self-consciousness, he did not deny this to the Supreme Being.

"There is an important *equivoque* in our use of the word unconscious, — a word which is much played upon in the psychology of the present day. We say that our virtue and genius are unconscious; that they are the influx of God, and the like. The objector replies that to represent the Divine Being as an unconscious somewhat is abhorrent, etc. But the unconsciousness we spoke of was merely relative to us. We speak, we act, from we know not what higher principle; and we describe its circumambient quality by confessing the subjection of our perceptions to it; we cannot overtop, oversee it, — not see at all its channel into us. But, in saying this, we predicate nothing of its consciousness or unconsciousness in relation to itself. We see at once that we have no language subtle enough for distinctions in that inaccessible region. That air is too rare for the wings of words. We cannot say God is self-conscious or not self-conscious, for the moment we cast our eye on that dread nature it soars infinitely out of all definition and dazzles all inquest."

"The human mind seems a lens formed to concentrate the rays of the divine laws to a focus which shall be the personality of God. But that focus falls so far into the infinite that the form or person of God is not within the ken of the mind. Yet must that ever be the effort of a good mind, because the avowal of our sincere doubts leaves us

in a less favorable mood for action; and the statement of our best thoughts, or those of our convictions that make most for theism, induces new courage and force." (Journal, 1835.)

Emerson's denial of God's personality was only an affirmation of the infinitude of his nature, transcending all the efforts of human imagination and understanding to compass and express it. But, without venturing further into these troubled waters, so much, at least, is clear, that the Liberals were in no position to warn the public against Emerson's speculations until they had put their own into a more seaworthy condition. Admitting that there was danger in detaching the religious ideas from the forms with which they had been invested, the danger was incurred when it was denied that Christ was God; for it was only in the person of Christ that God had been supposed to reveal himself immediately to the Christian consciousness. The whole tradition stood upon that fact; if it was denied, the historical evidences became irrelevant.

Emerson did not think very highly of his address; he had not said what he most wished to say, but he was surprised to find his intention so far mistaken as to leave many of his Unitarian brethren to suppose that he was trying to belittle the character of Jesus. Far from this, he was trying to place the reverence for Jesus upon its true ground, out of reach of the reaction that was sure

to set in when the claim to an exclusive revelation should lose its force.

"Another wood-thought was that since the parrot world will be swift to renounce the name of Christ, as amends to its pride for having raised i so high, it behooves the lover of God to love tha lover of God." (Journal, July, 1838.)

Miss Elizabeth Peabody, in her reminiscences o Dr. Channing,[1] says that a passage to this effect was omitted, for want of time, in the reading of the address, and that she urged Mr. Emerson to restore it in the printing. But he, on reflection, preferred to let the paper stand as it was read. His meaning was sufficiently plain; if not, he would not explain it by what might seem an afterthought.

For the moment it looked as if the effect of the discourse might be to exclude him from the lyceum as well as the church.

"I mean [he writes to his brother William] to lecture again in Boston the coming winter; and perhaps the people, scared by the newspapers, will not come and pay me for my paper and pens. I design to give away a large number of tickets, that I may not have labored wholly in vain."

(Journal.) "*August* 31. Yesterday at the Phi Beta Kappa anniversary. Steady, steady. I am convinced that if a man will be a true scholar he

[1] *Reminiscences of Rev. William Ellery Channing, D. D.* By Elizabeth Palmer Peabody. Boston, 1880: p. 373.

shall have perfect freedom. The young people and the mature hint at odium and the aversion of faces, to be presently encountered in society. I say no; I fear it not. For, if it be true that he is merely an observer, a dispassionate reporter, no partisan, his position is one of perfect immunity. To him no disgusts can attach; he is invulnerable. The vulgar think he would found a sect and be installed and made much of. He knows better, and much prefers his melons and his woods. Society has no bribe for me; neither in politics, nor church, nor college, nor city. My resources are far from exhausted. If they will not hear me lecture, I shall have leisure for my book, which wants me. Besides, it is a universal maxim, worthy of all acceptation, that a man may have that allowance which he takes. Take the place and the attitude to which you see your unquestionable right, and all men acquiesce. Who are these murmurers, these haters, these revilers? Men of no knowledge, and therefore no stability. The scholar, on the contrary, is sure of his point, is fast-rooted, and can surely predict the hour when all this roaring multitude shall roar for him. Analyze the chiding opposition, and it is made up of such timidities, uncertainties, and no-opinions that it is not worth dispersing.

"One often sees in the embittered acuteness of critics, snuffing heresy from afar, their own unbelief; and that they pour forth on the innocent pro-

mulgator of new doctrine their anger at that which they vainly resist in their own bosom."

The episode was disagreeable to him chiefly because it made him think about himself: —

"What is fit to engage me, and so engage others, permanently, is what has put off its weeds of time and place and personal relation. Therefore all that befalls me in the way of criticism and extreme blame or praise, drawing me out of equilibrium, putting me for a time in false position to people, and disallowing the spontaneous sentiments, wastes my time, bereaves me of thought, and shuts me up within poor, personal considerations. Therefore I hate to be conspicuous for blame or praise. My prayer is that I may never be deprived of a fact, but be always so rich in objects of study as never to feel this impoverishment of remembering myself."

TO WILLIAM EMERSON.

*September* 2, 1838.

The Cambridge address has given plentiful offence, and will, until nine days are out. The Divinity College has of course a right to a strong statement, disclaiming all acceptance of its doctrine, and expressing what degree of abhorrence it will; because otherwise the title-page would seem to make the college endorser of the heresy. The speech will serve, as some of the divisions in Congressional debates, to ascertain how men do think on a great question.

(Journal.) "Let me never fall into the vulgar mistake of dreaming that I am persecuted whenever I am contradicted. No man, I think, had ever a greater well-being with a less desert than I. I can very well afford to be accounted bad or foolish by a few dozen or a few hundred persons, — I who see myself greeted by the good expectation of so many friends, far beyond any power of thought or communication of thought residing in me. Besides, I own I am often inclined to take part with those who say I am bad or foolish. I know too well my own dark spots. Not having myself attained, not having satisfied myself, far from a holy obedience, how can I expect to satisfy others, to command their love? A few sour faces, a few biting paragraphs, are but a cheap expiation for all these shortcomings of mine."

He went back to his study, not much disturbed by the sour faces, but somewhat sore from the treatment he had received, and more annoyed, perhaps, at finding himself in a position of notoriety, as the supposed champion of the "new views."

# CHAPTER X.

## CONCORD. — VISITORS AND FRIENDS.

THE Concord study had already begun to be a mark for wanderers upon the high seas of religion and sociology, who touched there in great variety to take counsel or to compare latitudes. Among these came, in the autumn after the Divinity Hall speech, a visitor of an uncommon stamp: a religious mystic, the most simple and modest of men, but now inflamed by a sudden enthusiasm, which carried him beyond all the bounds of his natural disposition, and brought him to Emerson, not so much to compare notes or take counsel as to give it; or at least to warn Emerson against the pride of the intellect, and to exhort him to decease from a life of self-direction, and be born again to the will-less life of the spirit. This was Jones Very, a Salem youth, who, upon the slenderest means, had made his way to Harvard College, and, on graduating with distinction in 1836, had received the appointment of tutor in Greek to the freshman class. I was a member of that class, and I well remember the tall, angular figure and the solemn, fervent face that made one turn and look when he

passed. But what was still more remarkable and even singular was the personal interest he took in each one of us; and not so much in our proficiency in the college tasks (though he did not neglect that) as in the salvation of our souls. This was ground sufficient to the college authorities for concluding that he was mad, and must be removed to a lunatic hospital, or at any rate must leave his post; which he did without demur and even placed himself obediently under Dr. Bell's care at Somerville; though his madness did not, as far as I recollect, interfere with the discharge of his college duties, — indeed, consisted, I think, chiefly in the assumption that the precepts of the New Testament are literally true. There was, however, no doubt, an abnormal acceleration in him of the whole mental machinery; a psychical intoxication, which, for a time, intensified his religious impressions, and gave him, Emerson says, an extraordinary discernment in spiritual things: —

"What he said, held, was not personal to him; was no more disputable than the shining of yonder sun and the blowing of this south wind." Emerson writes to Miss Margaret Fuller: —

CONCORD, *November* 9, 1838.

Very has been here lately, and stayed a few days; confounding us all with the question whether he was insane. At first sight and speech you would

certainly pronounce him so. Talk with him a few hours, and you will think all insane but he. Monomania or monosania, he is a very remarkable person; and though his mind is not in a natural and probably not in a permanent state, he is a treasure of a companion, and I had with him most memorable conversations.

And in his journal: "He said to me: 'I always felt, when I heard you speak or read your writings, that you saw the truth better than others; yet I felt that your spirit was not quite right. It was as if a vein of colder air blew across me.' He thinks me covetous in my hold of truth, of seeing truth separate, and of receiving or taking it, instead of merely obeying. He seemed to expect of me — once especially in Walden wood — a full acknowledgment of his mission, and a participation of the same. Seeing this, I asked him if he did not see that my thoughts and my position were constitutional; that it would be false and impossible for me to say his things or try to occupy his ground, as for him to usurp mine. After some frank and full explanation he conceded this. When I met him afterwards, one evening at my lecture in Boston, I invited him to go home to Mr. Abel Adams's with me, and sleep, which he did. Early next day in the gray dawn he came into my room and talked while I dressed. He said: 'When I was in Con-

cord I tried to say you were also right; but the spirit said you were not right. It is as if I should say, It is not morning; but the morning says, It is the morning.'"

While he was at the asylum, Very wrote or finished an essay on Epic Poetry and two papers on Shakspeare, which he brought to Emerson together with some manuscript poems. The aim of the Shakspeare essays was to show that Shakspeare's ruling impulse was the joy of mere existence; he delighted to identify himself with every mode of life, and to express every kind and shade of activity; sharing the universal stir of nature, the unconscious operation of the divine will, without more thought of individual choice or volition than a tree, or the wind that whispers in its branches. He is the type of the natural or spontaneous man, as yet unfallen from the state of innocence into the consciousness of personality. In Hamlet the key-note is horror at the thought that the pleasure of existing must come to an end. In view of this, all enterprises, of whatever pith and moment, lose the name of action; they are not worth while. It is the longing of the natural man for the assurance of eternal existence. To us Hamlet seems mad, because our ruling passion is not the sense of being, of sharing the universal existence, but the desire to fence off some corner of the universe for ourselves; to be rich, powerful,

learned, intellectual. But it is only in resigning all this that we can find our true happiness. We must do, consciously and from a sense of duty, what Shakspeare did unconsciously, from the prompting of genius; yield ourselves to the operations of the divine will. We must be born again; or rather, we must be born, for as concerns our true life we are yet unborn.

These were Emerson's own thoughts, and we might expect that when they came to him clothed in flesh and blood, they would meet a ready welcome and response. Yet Very, coming to Concord on his "mission to the unborn," went away baffled and disappointed, though he did not lose his regard for Emerson, always asked after him, and used to send him the little poems he published from time to time in the Salem newspapers. At this time he left with him the manuscripts he had brought; which Emerson afterwards published.[1]

Very went back to his native town, where he remained until his death in 1880, preaching from time to time, but never settled as a minister. The

[1] *Essays and Poems, by Jones Very.* Boston, 1839. Reprinted, without the essays, but with a large additional number of poems and an appreciative note by way of memoir, by Very's townsman, Mr. William P. Andrews (Boston, 1883); and again, with the essays and a still larger addition to the poems, and with a portrait of Very, under the care of Dr. J. F. Clarke and Dr. C A. Bartol (Boston, 1886).

mental exaltation gradually subsided, leaving on his kindly, careworn face, as one met him in the Salem streets, the old look of rapt contemplation, but now dimmed and troubled as if by the burden of a message he had found himself unable to deliver.

Very's disappointment at finding Emerson seemingly cold to thoughts which he himself suggested was probably not an uncommon experience; Emerson's later friend, Mr. Henry James (the elder), found the same thing when he tried to take counsel with him on the profound truths that are wrapped up in the commonplaces of the Calvinistic theology, and upon the means of giving them effect upon society. Emerson accepted readily enough all that he said, so far as it was affirmative and hopeful, and he enjoyed the sparkling humor of Mr. James's attacks upon the social conventions; but he could not take them very seriously. Mr. James's lively account of his pursuit of Emerson, even to his bedchamber, in the unavailing effort to bring him to book on the topic of man's regeneration, is a good illustration of Emerson's attitude of mind, and how it might puzzle eager persons who were enticed into bringing their problems to him by the inviting, almost reverential way in which he received them: —

"On the whole, I may say that at first I was greatly disappointed in him, because his intellect never kept the promise which his lovely face and

manners held out to me. He was to my senses a literal divine presence in the house with me; and we cannot recognize literal divine presences in our houses without feeling sure that they will be able to say something of critical importance to one's intellect. It turned out that any average old dame in a horse-car would have satisfied my intellectual rapacity just as well as Emerson, . . . and though his immense personal fascination always kept up, he at once lost all intellectual prestige to my regard. I even thought that I had never seen a man more profoundly devoid of spiritual understanding. . . . In his books or public capacity he was constantly electrifying you by sayings full of divine inspiration. In his talk or private capacity he was one of the least remunerative men I ever encountered. No man could look at him speaking (or when he was silent either, for that matter) without having a vision of the divinest beauty. But when you went to him to hold discourse about the wondrous phenomenon, you found him absolutely destitute of reflective power."[1]

Mr. James's explanation is that Emerson was unconscious of any inward or spiritual difference between good and evil. "He was all his days an arch-traitor to our existing civilized regimen, inasmuch as he unconsciously managed to set aside its fundamental principle, in doing without conscience.

[1] *Literary Remains*, p. 297.

. . . He had no conscience, in fact, and lived by perception, which is an altogether lower or less spiritual faculty." And Mr. John Morley, in his admirably appreciative essay on Emerson, has a criticism which perhaps comes to the same thing: —

"Emerson has little to say of that horrid burden and impediment on the soul, which the churches call Sin, and which, by whatever name we call it, is a very real catastrophe in the moral nature of man. He had no eye, like Dante's, for the vileness, the cruelty, the utter despicableness to which humanity may be moulded. If he saw them at all, it was through the softening and illusive medium of generalized phrases. . . . The courses of nature and the prodigious injustices of man in society affect him with neither horror nor awe. He will see no monster if he can help it. For the fatal Nemesis or terrible Erinnyes, daughters of Erebus and Night, Emerson substitutes a fair-weather abstraction named Compensation."[1]

There is some foundation, no doubt, for this feeling about Emerson, but I think a truer account of his disinclination to look on the seamy side of nature or of man is to be found in the sentence which Mr. Morley quotes from the essay on Fate: "It is wholesome to man to look not at Fate, but the other way; the practical view is the other."[2] And

[1] *Ralph Waldo Emerson.* An Essay. New York, 1884: p. 50.

[2] *Collected Writings,* vi. 28, 34.

this from the essay on the Over Soul: "We grant that human life is mean, but how did we find out that it was mean?"[1] The profitable view is that it is something we can help to make better. It is not worth while to dwell much on shortcomings, on human miseries or faults, but only to use them as the occasions for improvement. "We can afford to allow the limitation if we know it is the meter of the growing man." Hence his dislike of preaching and of fault-finding. He would listen, as Mr. James says, "with earnest respect and sympathy whenever you plead for society as the redeemed form of our nature," but if you attacked a particular institution, the church, for instance, as false or inadequate, he would appear to be "entirely ignorant of its existence;" he could not, in fact, attend to what you said. If you did not like it, your business was to ignore it and to put something better in its place. In his reply to a young minister who had been impressed by the exhortations of the Divinity Hall address, and was somewhat in doubt how to give them practical application, Emerson says:—

"We talk of the community and of the church, but what are these but what we let them be? When we are faithful we know them not: absorbed with our own thought, sure of our duties, we cumber ourselves never with the church; in fact, all that

[1] *Collected Writings*, ii. 251.

is alive in the church is in us. As soon as we step aside a little and consult history and facts, straightway society grows a great matter and the soul a small circumstance."

He was ready and eager for every one's ideas about progress and reform, but his chief interest was in their tendency: how they were to be realized was the affair of the individual. If you urged them upon him, he would receive your remarks in gracious silence, or answer at cross-purposes, or with some "implacably mild" agreement, as Mr. James complains.

I should have supposed that some such experiences of my own were peculiar, and that Emerson's earlier and closer friends were more successful in drawing him into discussion; but if Mr. James failed, I can hardly believe that any one ever really succeeded, though Emerson's invariable urbanity might sometimes conceal the failure.

This seeming impassivity and want of response was often perplexing to those who came to him, and even to himself. I have already spoken of Margaret Fuller's disappointments; even Mr. Alcott, of all men the least exacting of response, felt "the pains to be impersonal or discrete" as the one subtraction from Emerson's charm.[1] Mr. James, in reply to my request to be allowed to read

[1] *R. W. Emerson: an Estimate of his Character and Genius, in Prose and Verse.* By A. B. Alcott. Boston, 1882: p. 40.

the letters from him which I found among Emerson's papers, says: —

"I cannot flatter myself that any letter I ever wrote to Emerson is worth your reading. If you think it may be, pray read it and welcome. Emerson always kept one at such arm's-length, tasting him and sipping him and trying him, to make sure that he was worthy of his somewhat prim and bloodless friendship, that it was fatiguing to write him letters. I can't recall any serious letter I ever sent him. I remember well what maidenly letters I used to receive from him, with so many tentative charms of expression in them that if he had been a woman one would have delighted in complimenting him; but, as it was, you could say nothing about them, but only pocket the disappointment they brought. It is painful to recollect now the silly hope that I had, along the early days of our acquaintance, that if I went on listening something would be sure to drop from him that would show me an infallible way out of this perplexed world. For nothing ever came but epigrams; sometimes clever, sometimes not."

This, I am sure, is quite unjust to Mr. James's real feeling about Emerson, — it was written in illness and depression, just before his death; indeed, he himself, in the essay from which I have quoted, says that Emerson's relations to people were governed entirely by his friendly and affec-

tionate feelings; and he illustrates the remark by an allusion to Emerson's treatment of Wendell Phillips, when the latter "ventilated his not untimely wit" in aspersions of Emerson's friend, Judge Hoar.[1] But it expresses what many persons, led by Emerson's ever gracious manner and his entire and unmistakable hospitality of mind, may have felt when they tried to make him take their point of view. Dr. Holmes says of him,[2] "His friends were all who knew him;" and it is indeed remarkable how the personal impression of the man melted all opposition and even indifference in those who met him. Yet he found himself constantly thwarted, not merely in the ordinary intercourse of society but in his friendships, by "unseasonable epilepsies of wit and spirits." There were "fences," he said, between him and some of his dearest friends.

(Journal, 1837.) "Is it not pathetic that the action of men on men is so partial? We never touch but at points. The most that I can have of my fellow-man or be to him, is it the reading of his book, or the hearing of his project in conversation? I approach some Carlyle, with desire and joy. I am led on from month to month with an expectation of some total embrace and oneness with a no-

[1] Emerson told Dr. Bartol that the next time he met Mr. Phillips he refused him his hand.

[2] *Ralph Waldo Emerson.* By Oliver Wendell Holmes. [American Men of Letters.] Boston, 1885: p. 367.

ble mind; and learn at last that it is only so feeble and remote and hiant action as reading a Mirabeau or a Diderot paper. This is all that can be looked for; more we shall not be to each other. Balked soul! It is not that the sea and poverty and pursuit separate us. Here is Alcott by my door, — yet is the union more profound? No; the sea, vocation, poverty, are seeming fences, but man is insular and cannot be touched. Every man is an infinitely repellent orb, and holds his individual being on that condition."

"Some people [he writes in his journal in 1839] are born public souls, and live with all their doors open to the street. Close beside them we find in contrast the lonely man, with all his doors shut, reticent, thoughtful, shrinking from crowds, afraid to take hold of hands; thankful for the existence of the other, but incapable of such performance, wondering at its possibility; full of thoughts, but paralyzed and silenced instantly by these boisterous masters; and, though loving his race, discovering at last that he has no proper sympathy with persons, but only with their genius and aims. He is solitary because he has society in his thought, and, when people come in, they drive away his society and isolate him. We would all be public men, if we could afford it; I am wholly private; such is the poverty of my constitution. Heaven 'betrayed me to a book, and wrapped me in a

gown.' I have no social talent, no will, and a steady appetite for insights in any or all directions, to balance my manifold imbecilities.

"S. M. F. [Fuller] writes me that she waits for the lectures; seeing well after much intercourse that the best of me is there. She says very truly, and I thought it a good remark which somebody repeated here from S. S., that I 'always seemed to be on stilts.' It is even so. Most of the persons whom I see in my own house I see across a gulf. I cannot go to them nor they come to me. Nothing can exceed the frigidity and labor of my speech with such. You might turn a yoke of oxen between every pair of words; and the behavior is as awkward and proud. I see the ludicrousness of the plight as well as they. But never having found any remedy, I am very patient of this folly or shame; patient of my churl's mask, in the belief that this privation has certain rich compensations. And yet, in one who sets his mark so high, who presumes so vast an elevation as the birthright of man, is it not a little sad to be a mere mill or pump, yielding one wholesome product in one particular mode, but as impertinent and worthless in any other place or purpose as a pump or a coffee-mill would be in a parlor?"

In his own domestic circle Emerson was affectionate and unreserved, even playful; but beyond that he had few intimates, hardly any except those

who had been the companions of his childhood. To his children, and sometimes to young persons not of his own family, he could unbosom himself; and there are men who were then boys who remember him as full of personal solicitude and encouragement, even of tenderness, towards them. "My special parish [he once said] is young men seeking their way." With older people it fared best when, like Hawthorne, they were satisfied to stand at a distance, without coming to any close questioning upon the riddle of the universe; or when their genius and aims were large and indefinite, never descending to particular problems.

"When we come to speak with those who most fully accord in life and doctrine with ourselves, lo! what mountains high and rivers wide. How still the word is to seek which can, like a ferryman, transport either into the point of view of the other."

"The porcupine impossibility of contact with men" in one of such boundless charity and liberality of spirit exposed him, he said, to "very disagreeable rencontres. To meet those who expect light from you, and to be provoked to thwart and discountenance and unsettle them by all you say, is pathetical." Nor was it only in general society that he felt this regret; the nearer people stood to him the more difficult he had sometimes found it to communicate himself: —

"Strange it is that I can go back to no part of youth, no past relation, without shrinking and shrinking. Not Ellen, not Edward, not Charles. Infinite compunctions embitter each of these dear names and all who surrounded them. I console myself with the thought that if Ellen, if Edward, if Charles, could have read my entire heart they should have seen nothing but rectitude of purpose and generosity conquering the superficial coldness and prudence. But I ask now why I was not made, like these beatified mates of mine, superficially generous and noble as well as internally so. They never needed to shrink at any remembrance, and I — at so many sad passages that look to me now as if I had been blind and mad. This is the thorn in the flesh."

Yet he had nothing of the passion for solitude that some men have felt. "Solitude [he says when he was left alone for a day or two] is fearsome and heavy-hearted." He never could have been a hermit, — the desire for companionship and communication was at all times too strong in him, though there was also a constitutional sensitiveness that made him shrink from close contact. But the repulsion was chiefly, I think, the effect of an intellectual habit, — the habit of dwelling in his impressions, taking them, as he said, as wholes, without reducing them to any common denomination. This made him, in spite of his intellectual curiosity and

the entire catholicity of his mind, averse to any comparison of opinions. He could not come down from his watch-tower to compare notes with other observers, and if they came to him they put him out.

"It seemed to me [he writes in his journal], as I mused in the street in Boston on the unpropitious effect of the town on my humor, that there needs a certain deliberation and tenacity in the entertainment of a thought, — a certain 'longanimity,' to make that confidence and stability which can meet the demands others make on us; my thoughts are too short, as they say my sentences are. I step along from stone to stone over the Lethe which gurgles round my path, but the odds are that my companion encounters me just as I leave one stone and before my foot has well reached the other; and down I tumble into Lethe water."

He did not hold his thoughts by means of their relations to premises, on the strength of reasons such as others may appreciate, but merely through the impression on his own mind, which could not be communicated.

Emerson, Mr. James says, "had no prosaic side relating him to ordinary people." Rather, I should say, his nature and circumstances had predisposed him to ignore the prosaic side, the accidents of the

individual, in himself and others, and to look at each person as a type, an illustration of a particular side of humanity. Every kind and manner of man interested him, and the more the greater the difference from himself. Every man, he took for granted, had his own ideal, his vision of perfection; and he was eager to know what it was that made the particular object of pursuit interesting, what seemed best worth while in the other's scheme of life. But further than this he did not readily go.

"I like man [he writes in his journal at this time], but not men. The genius of humanity is very easily and accurately to be made out by the poet-mind; but it is not in Miss Nancy or Adoniram in any sufficiency. I like man, but not men. Instincts, tendencies,—they do no wrong; they are beautiful, and may be confided in and obeyed. Though they slay us let us trust them. But why should eggs and tadpoles talk? All is mere sketch, symptomatic, possible and probable for us; we dwellers in tents, we outlines in chalk, we jokes and buffooneries, why should we be talking? Let us have the grace to be abstemious."

"In the highest friendship [he says in a letter in 1838] we form a league with the Idea of the man who stands to us in that relation,—not with the actual person. We deal with him as a just, true, pure, and universal soul; and make him, therefore, a representative to us of the entire humanity."

It would be misleading to represent this as Emerson's view of friendship; still it was one of his views, or one of his moods, and it may help to explain Mr. James's paradox that a man of "immense personal fascination" could be "one of the least remunerative" of companions; since it is always fascinating to be taken at one's best, and yet, to be taken as a representative figure, a specimen of universal humanity, may become exhausting. Emerson was not unaware of the peculiarity. He writes to Margaret Fuller about a new acquaintance: —

CONCORD, *March* 8, 1839.

. . . Our boundless interest in fine people seems ever to betray us into false positions. We wish them to make for us, on each rare and accidental occasion, an exhibition of their nature and talent. 'O excellent person,' we civilly say, 'I know and have heard that thou art a select soul, and that all the gods love thee. Vouchsafe on the instant to give me an authentic sign of all thou art, and all thou hopest to do. And, O excellent, do it speedily, for I may never meet thee again.' Thus adjured, how can anybody be so preposterous as to hesitate, or hide his virtues? Nevertheless, how can the modest inquirer ask less? This is what we really would know: What are you? and would know it of more persons than our domestic and practical round of action will ever include. This

craving it was which invented the old Elysium and invents the later Heaven."

And to another correspondent he writes: —

"What is it or can it be to you that, through the long, mottled, trivial years, a dreaming brother cherishes in a corner some picture of you as a type or nucleus of happier visions and a freer life? I am so safe, in my iron limits, from intrusion or extravagance that I can well afford to indulge my humor with the figures that pass my dungeon window, without incurring any risk of a ridiculous shock from coming hand to hand with my Ariels and Gabriels. Besides, if you and other deceivers should really not have the attributes of which you hang out the sign, — you were meant to have them; they are in the world, and it is with good reason that I rejoice in the tokens."

Margaret Fuller, like Mr. James, was not satisfied with such a relation, and she returned again and again to the charge, until Emerson was obliged to explain that the matter was not to be dealt with in this way. He writes to her: —

CONCORD, *October* 24, 1840.

MY DEAR MARGARET, — I have your frank and noble and affecting letter, — and yet I think I could wish it unwritten. I ought never to have suffered you to lead me into any conversation or

writing on our relation, — a topic from which with all persons my Genius ever sternly warns me away. I was content and happy to meet on a human footing a woman of sense and sentiment, with whom one could exchange reasonable words, and go away assured that wherever she went was light and force and honor. That is to me a solid good; it gives value to thought and the day; it redeems society from that foggy and misty aspect it wears so often, seen from our retirement; it is the foundation of everlasting friendship.

. . . But tell me that I am cold or unkind, and, in my most flowing state, I become a cake of ice; I can feel the crystals shoot and the drops solidify. It may do for others, but it is not for me to bring the relation to speech. Instantly I find myself a solitary, unrelated person, destitute not only of all social faculty, but of all private substance. I see precisely the double of my state in my little Waldo, when, in the midst of his dialogue with his hobby-horse, in the full tide of his eloquence, I should ask him if he loves me, — he is mute and stupid. . . . I take it for granted that everybody will show me kindness and wit, and am too happy in the observation of all the abundant particulars of the show to feel the slightest obligation resting on me to do anything or say anything for the company. I talk to my hobby, and will join you in harnessing and driving him; but ask me what I

think of you and me, and I am put to confusion. . . . There is a difference in our constitution. We use a different rhetoric. It seems as if we had been born and bred in different nations. You say you understand me wholly. You cannot communicate yourself to me. I hear the words sometimes, but remain a stranger to your state of mind. Yet are we all the time a little nearer. I honor you for a brave and beneficent woman, and mark with gladness your steadfast good-will to me. I see not how we can bear each other anything else than good-will, though we had sworn to the contrary. And now, what will you? The stars in Orion do not quarrel this night, but shine in peace in their old society. Are we not much better than they? Let us live as we have always done, only ever better, I hope, and richer. Speak to me of everything but myself, and I will endeavor to make an intelligible reply. . . .

Yours affectionately, R. W. EMERSON.

Of course the case was worse, when, instead of an abundant nature like Miss Fuller or Mr. James, well-meaning persons, with an insufficient dose of their own quality, came to him to be filled and directed.

"People stretch out to him their mendicant arms, to whom he feels that he does not belong, and who do not belong to him. He freezes them

with his face of apathy, and they very naturally tax him with selfishness. The most unfit associates hasten to him with joy and confidence that they are the very ones whom his faith and philosophy invite; they mar all his days with their follies and then with their tacit reproaches, so that his fair ideal of domestic life and serene household gods he cannot realize, but is afflicted instead with censures from the inmate, censures from the observer, and necessarily, if he be of a sympathetic character, censures from himself also. Could they not die, or succeed, or help themselves, or draw others, or draw me, or offend me? In any manner, I care not how, could they not be disposed of, and cease to hang there in the horizon, an unsettled appearance, too great to be neglected and not great enough to be of any avail to this great craving humanity?"

These were confidences for his journal; outwardly he made no sign, nor was the "devastator of the day," though he might feel some disappointment, often, I think, led to suspect the annoyance he gave. Emerson was steadily faithful to his ideal of society, in spite of all mischances, and kept his house open to all who chose to come, even if they stayed all day. "Especially [he writes in his journal] if one of those monotones (whereof, as my friends think, I have a savage society, like a menag-

erie of monsters) come to you, receive him." And he was always ready for the project of a club, or a meeting for conversation, though all his experience was against them.

(Journal, 1838–9.) "Shall I not paint in these pages an experience so conspicuous to me and so often repeated in these late years as the debating club; now under the name of Teachers' Meeting, now a Conference, now an Esthetic Club, and now a Religious Association, but always bearing for me the same fruit, — a place where my memory works more than my wit, and so I come away with compunction? Is it because I am such a bigot to my own whims that I distrust the advantage to be derived from literary *conversazioni?*"

Meetings for talk upon high topics were then much in vogue. They naturally fell into monologue, not leading to much interchange of opinions. Emerson somewhere quotes with approbation a rule for such meetings, — that no one should reply to what had been said by another speaker. He, I think, rarely said much; the chief value for him was the stimulus to his own thoughts. Even of Mr. Alcott, who was his oracle if any one was, he says: —

"When I go to talk with Alcott, it is not so much to get his thoughts as to watch myself under his influence. He excites me, and I think freely."

Besides the monotones, there were, among Emerson's visitors of that prolific time, many strange figures. Not only the "men with beards," noticeable then as men without beards are now, but men who chose to go without shoes, or, *per contra*, to keep their hats on when they came into the house. One of these latter resisting all hints and offers to relieve him of his hat, Emerson took his own, and said, "Well, then, if you prefer it, we will talk in the yard," and led the way thither.

Although it could not be said of Emerson, as it was of Wordsworth, that his study was out-of-doors, yet the afternoon walk was an important part of his day, for other purposes than that of bodily exercise. He composed more freely, he said, upon the hills, and he conversed more freely, when he had a companion, as sometimes happened (though never as a rule more than one, except on Sundays), — oftenest in these days Thoreau, or Mr. Ellery Channing, as keen an observer of nature as Thoreau, and always good company for Emerson. Mr. Alcott, I think, did not love to walk; he generally, I have heard, before they got far, came to anchor for greater convenience of talking.

Another noticeable person lived (from 1842 till 1846) at the other extremity of the village, in the Old Manse, which he has made famous, — Hawthorne; a greater walker, too, though he did not

often walk with Emerson; never that I know of but once, when Emerson sought him out for the purpose, soon after Hawthorne's first coming to live in Concord.

"I have forgotten in what year [Emerson writes in his journal after Hawthorne's death, and afterwards inserts "September 27, 1842"], whilst he lived in the Manse, soon after his marriage, I said to him, I shall never see you in this hazardous way; we must take a long walk together. Will you go to Harvard and visit the Shakers? He agreed. . . . It was a satisfactory tramp; we had good talk on the way, of which I set down some record in my journal."

Here is the record: —

"September 27 was a fine day, and Hawthorne and I set forth on a walk. Our walk had no incidents, it needed none; we were in excellent spirits, had much conversation, for we were both old collectors who had never had opportunity before to show each other our cabinets, so that we could have filled with matter much longer days. We agreed that it needed a little dash of humor or extravagance in the traveller to give occasion to incident in his journey. Here we sober men, easily pleased, kept on the outside of the land, and did not by so much as a request for a cup of milk creep into any farm-house. If want of pence in our pocket or some vagary in our brain drove us into these 'huts

where poor men lie,' to crave dinner or night's lodging, it would be so easy to break into some mesh of domestic romance, learn so much pathetic private history, — perchance see the first blush mantle on the cheek of the young girl when the mail-stage came or did not come; or even get entangled ourselves in some thread of gold or gray. Then again the opportunities which the taverns once offered the traveller, of witnessing and even sharing in the joke or the politics of the teamsters and farmers on the road, are now no more. The Temperance Society emptied the bar-room; it is a cold place. H. tried to smoke a cigar, but I observed he was soon out on the piazza. After noon we reached Stow, and dined; then continued our journey towards Harvard; making our day's walk, according to our best computation, about twenty miles. The last miles, however, we rode in a wagon, having been challenged by a friendly, fatherly gentleman, who knew my name and my father's name and history, and who insisted on doing the honors of his town to us, and of us to his townsmen; for he fairly installed us at the tavern, introduced us to the Doctor and to General ——, and bespoke the landlord's best attention to our wants. Next morning we began our walk, at half past six o'clock, to the Shaker village, distant three miles and a half. Whilst the good sisters were getting ready our breakfast we had a conversation with Seth Blanch-

ard and Cloutman, of the Brethren, who gave an honest account, by yea and by nay, of their faith and practice. They were not stupid, like some whom I have seen of their society, and not worldly, like others. The conversation on both parts was frank enough. With the downright I will be downright, thought I; and Seth showed some humor. I doubt not we should have had our way with them to a good extent (not quite after the manner of Hayraddin Maugrabin with the monks of Liège) if we could have stayed twenty-four hours; although my powers of persuasion were crippled by a disgraceful barking cold, and Hawthorne inclined to play Jove more than Mercurius. . . . They are in many ways an interesting society, but at present have an additional importance as an experiment of Socialism, which so falls in with the temper of the times. . . . Moreover, this settlement is of great value in the heart of the country as a model farm, in the absence of that rural nobility we talked of yesterday. . . . From the Shaker village we came to Littleton, and thence to Acton; still in the same redundance of splendor. It was like a day of July; and from Acton we sauntered leisurely homeward to finish the nineteen miles of our second day before four in the afternoon."

Of their talk there is unhappily no report, but it was doubtless mostly on the surface. They admired and liked each other personally, but they

were very unlike in nature, and of an unlikeness that had no mutual attraction. They "interdespised" each other's moonshine, as very amiable and pretty, but rather childish. In his journal, in 1838, Emerson writes: —

"Elizabeth Peabody [Hawthorne's sister-in-law] brought me yesterday Hawthorne's 'Footprints on the Seashore' to read. I complained that there was no inside to it. Alcott and he together would make a man."

When Hawthorne returned to Concord, in 1852, he lived at Emerson's end of the village, but they came no closer to each other. Upon Hawthorne's death Emerson writes in his journal: —

"I thought there was a tragic element in the event that might be more fully rendered, in the painful solitude of the man; which, I suppose, could not longer be endured, and he died of it. I have found in his death a surprise and a disappointment. I thought him a greater man than any of his words betray; there was still a great deal of work in him, and he might one day show a purer power. Moreover, I have felt sure of him, in his neighborhood and in his necessities of sympathy and intelligence, — that I could well wait his time, his unwillingness and caprice, and might one day conquer a friendship. It would have been a happiness, doubtless, to both of us, to have come into habits of unreserved intercourse. It was easy to

talk with him; there were no barriers; only he said so little that I talked too much, and stopped only because, as he gave no indication, I feared to exceed. He showed no egotism or self-assertion; rather a humility, and at one time a fear that he had written himself out. One day when I found him at the top of his hill, in the woods, he paced back the path to the house, and said: 'This path is the only remembrance of me that will remain.' Now it appears that I waited too long."

"I do not think any of his books worthy of his genius. I admired the man, who was simple, amiable, truth-loving, and frank in conversation, but I never read his books with pleasure; they are too young."

When the Hawthornes left the Manse, in 1846, the owner, Reverend Samuel Ripley, Emerson's uncle, moved thither from Waltham. His wife, Mrs. Sarah Alden (Bradford) Ripley, was an early friend of the Emersons from the dark days at Boston before her marriage, and her interest in the boys, particularly Waldo, had begun in their childhood. She used to correspond with him about his studies and his early verse-making, and she had watched his course with steady friendship ever since. There was in her a remarkable union of the loveliest domestic character and untiring devotion to an extraordinary weight and variety of household duties

with a lifelong enthusiasm for learning. Emerson, in an obituary notice (*Boston Daily Advertiser*, July 31, 1867), says of her: —

"Any knowledge, all knowledge, was welcome. The thirst for knowledge would not let her sleep. Her stores increased day by day. She was absolutely without pedantry. Nobody ever heard of her learning until a necessity came for its use, and then nothing could be more simple than her solution of the problem proposed to her. . . . She was not only the most amiable but the tenderest of women, wholly sincere, thoughtful for others, . . . absolutely without appetite for luxury or display or praise or influence, with entire indifference to trifles."

This last trait he illustrates by the story of her friend Miss Mary Emerson's trial of her by putting into her hand, at one of their flittings across the town, a broom, to be carried to the new lodging. "This she faithfully carried across Boston Common, from Summer Street to Hancock Street, without hesitation or remark." Her life was too full of substantial interests to allow her to mind trifles; and this loving enthusiasm she imparted to those who came near her. One of her pupils (for, among other things, she found time and strength to fit boys for college, and to superintend the work of college-students "rusticated" to Waltham) says of her (*Boston Evening Transcript*, August 8,

1867): "What a wealth of learning and thought and feeling she poured out for these pupils! Illumined by her clear intellect, the knottiest problem was disentangled; embellished by such a lover of learning, the driest subject was made interesting. . . . Her faith in their intuitions and capabilities lifted them and shamed or encouraged them to efforts impossible under another instructor; for she did not merely impart instruction, she educated all the powers of the mind and heart."

Her friendship for Emerson brought reproaches upon her from her implacable friend, his aunt Mary, as having some part in his aberrations. This was probably a mistake; at least Emerson was conscious of no such influence, and, indeed, shows remarkably small interest in her metaphysical and scientific studies.

"S. A. R. [he writes in his journal] is a bright foreigner; she signalizes herself among the figures of this masquerade. I do not hope, when I see her, to gain anything, any thought: she is choked, too, by the multitude of all her riches, — Greek and German, Biot and Bichat, chemistry and philosophy. All this is bright obstruction. But capable she is of high and calm intelligence, and of putting all the facts, all life, aloof. She is superior to all she knows. . . . She has an innate purity and nobility which releases her once for all from any solicitudes for decorum, or dress, or other ap-

pearances. No dust or grime could stick to the pure silver."

The kind of influence she exerted on him is rather to be traced in the following extract from his journal in 1838: —

"Yesterday at Waltham. The kindness and genius that blend their light in the eyes of Mrs. Ripley inspire me with some feeling of unworthiness; at least with impatience of doing so little to deserve so much confidence."

She was one of those friends whom he loved to have, like his books, within reach, whether he used them or not. After Mr. Ripley's death in 1847, she came regularly to Emerson's house on Sunday evenings, and her radiant social influence gave rise to regular and numerous gatherings there on that evening, which Emerson greatly enjoyed.

Miss Elizabeth Hoar, of Concord (the collector of a loving memorial of Mrs. Ripley in the "Worthy Women of our First Century"), was a sister to Emerson from the death of his brother Charles, to whom she was engaged to be married, and this intimate relation to one gifted as she was with an extraordinary fineness of perception, but whose constitutional reserve, equal to his own, would, but for this tie, have precluded intimacy, was a constant occasion of self-congratulation with him. Abundant sentiment without a touch of sentimen-

tality, and an unswerving balance of mind joined with entire openness to ideas, made her a most valuable counterpoise to the eager idealists about him. "The fine and finest young people [he writes in 1837] despise life, but Elizabeth Hoar and I agree that it is a great excess of politeness in us to look scornful or to cry for company, — we to whom a day is a sound and solid good." She is the *confidante*, and as it were the touchstone of his ideas; and many sentences in the Essays are their mutual confidences. He speaks in his journal of the "admirable fairness" of her mind: "I think no one who writes or utilizes his opinions can possibly be so fair. She will see finer *nuances* of equity which you would never see if untold. She applied the Napoleon *mot*, 'Respect the burden,' so well to Lincoln *quoad* Wendell Phillips."

"The last night, talked with Elizabeth the Wise, who defined common sense as the perception of the inevitable laws of existence. The philosophers considered only such laws as could be stated; but sensible men, those also which could not be stated, — a very just distinction. Her illustration of the common laws was: You must count your money; for, if you call it petty and count it not, 'through greatness of soul,' it will have its revenge on your soul by coming in thither also in the sequel, with injurious suspicions of your best friends, and other disquietudes."

"I had occasion the other day to say to E. H. that I like best the strong and worthy persons, like her father [Samuel Hoar], who support the social order without hesitation or misgiving: [then, after a paragraph describing the eager reformers] but there is a third class who are born into a new heaven and earth, with organs for the new element, and who, from that Better, behold this bad world in which the million gropes and suffers. By their life and happiness in the new, I am assured of the doom of the old, and these, therefore, I love and worship."

"E. H. consecrates. I have no other friend whom I more wish to be immortal than she; an influence I cannot spare, but must always have at hand for recourse."